MARVEL

NIGHTCRAWLER®

LAND
Ryan
J-Po

THE DEVIL INSIDE

GUARDIAN DEVIL!

The X-Man known as Nightcrawler is a man with a foot in two worlds – one the daylight world of super heroes and super-villains; the other a netherworld of demons and angels, ghosts and monsters…human and otherwise.

With the looks of a devil and the soul of a kind, ordinary man, Nightcrawler is used to being pulled in both directions, but now he might be asked to go where the other X-Men won't – into the shadows that have always called to him! Does he have what it takes to get to the bottom of the strange deaths of thirteen children – and more important, is he strong enough to take on the sinister forces behind it once he does?

Collecting *Nightcrawler #1-6*, written by **Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa** (*Marvel Knights 4*) and illustrated by **Darick Robertson** (*Wolverine*).

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NIGHTCRAWLER®

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THE DEVIL INSIDE

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AGUIRRE-SACASA
ROBERTSON
FAUCHER
NIGHTCRAWLER™
LAND
Ryan
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NOW IN HIS OWN SERIES!

"THIS, THEN, IS THE UNSPEAKABLE THING THAT HAPPENED AT METRO-GENERAL HOSPITAL LAST NIGHT.
"ON THE FIFTEENTH FLOOR OF THE CHILDREN'S PSYCHIATRIC WARD, BARNEY FRANKS--THE NIGHT GUARD ON DUTY--WAS STANDING AT HIS POST, OUTSIDE A LOCKED DOOR.
"THIS WAS AT 8:04 P.M.
METRO GENERAL SECUR
"WHEN BARNEY FRANKS CHECKED ON HIS CHARGES--14 CHILDREN, ALL OF THEM PATIENTS--THEY WERE PLAYING INSIDE THE LOCKED RECREATION ROOM..."

"…AT WHICH POINT, FRANKS TOOK AN UNSCHEDULED BATHROOM BREAK (WHICH HE NEVER DOES), LEAVING HIS POST UNATTENDED…
"…FOR FOUR MINUTES.
"WHEN HE RETURNED…
"…AT 8:08 P.M…
"…AND LOOKED INTO THE ROOM…
"…WHAT HE SAW…"

THE DEVIL INSIDE PART ONE

THE LOCKED ROOM

"..."
"WHAT, ORORO? WHAT DID FRANKS SEE?"

ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA WRITER | **DARICK ROBERTSON** PENCILER | **WAYNE FAUCHER** INKER | **AVALON'S MATT MILLA** COLORS | **VC'S CORY PETIT** LETTERS | **STEPHANIE MOORE & SEAN RYAN** ASSISTANT EDITORS | **MIKE MARTS** EDITOR | **JOE QUESADA** EDITOR IN CHIEF | **DAN BUCKLEY** PUBLISHER

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THIRTEEN OF THE FOURTEEN CHILDREN WERE DEAD, KURT. *MUTILATED* AND DEAD.
MEIN GOTT. HOW? *WHY?*
SEVERE TRAUMA, BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL. INSIDE THEM, THEIR ORGANS HAD BEEN PULPED. OUTSIDE THEM...
...ALL OF THEIR EYES HAD BURST FROM THEIR SKULLS. MOST OF THEIR TEETH HAD BROKEN OFF AND WERE LYING ON THE GROUND NEXT TO THEM.
THEY HAD BLED--OR WERE STILL BLEEDING--FROM THEIR EYE SOCKETS, THEIR NOSES, THEIR EARS...
THIS HAPPENED...
...TO *CHILDREN?*
YES...
...AND NO ONE KNOWS HOW OR WHY. SOMETHING HAPPENED TO THE VIDEO CAMERA IN THE ROOM WHERE THEY WERE PLAYING.
IT SHOWS THE CHILDREN PLAYING, THEN FOUR MINUTES OF STATIC, THEN...WHAT I'VE JUST TOLD YOU.
ARE THERE CAMERAS IN THE HALLWAY?
TWO OF THEM AT EITHER END. WHICH SHOW FRANKS LEAVING THE DOOR UNATTENDED, THEN FOUR MINUTES OF EMPTY HALLWAY--DURING WHICH TIME NO ONE ENTERED OR LEFT THE ROOM--THEN FRANKS COMING BACK.
WHICH MEANS, KURT, THAT EITHER THE CHILDREN DIED VIOLENTLY AND SPONTANEOUSLY FOR NO APPARENT REASON--
--OR THEY WERE KILLED BY THE SURVIVING CHILD, A TEN-YEAR-OLD BOY NAMED *SETH WALKER* WHO, FROM THE LOOKS OF HIM, WOULDN'T HURT A SOUL--
--OR... SOMEONE TELEPORTED INTO THE ROOM AND SLAUGHTERED THEM.

AH.
AND I ASSUME THAT THE ROOM'S WINDOWS WERE LOCKED AND UNBROKEN, RULING OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOMEONE ENTERED THAT WAY.
THAT'S RIGHT, KURT.
AND YOU'RE TELLING ME ALL THIS BECAUSE IF A TELEPORTER *WAS* INVOLVED, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO OFFER SOME INSIGHT? OR BECAUSE YOU WANT ME TO--?
GO TO METRO-GENERAL, KURT, TO DO WHATEVER YOU CAN.
THERE HAVE BEEN RUMBLINGS-- RUMORS, MOSTLY--THAT A MUTANT MAY BE INVOLVED. THAT EITHER THE KILLER-- WHOEVER HE OR SHE MAY BE--IS A MUTANT...
...OR THAT THE SURVIVING BOY IS.
YOU DON'T KNOW?
NO, THERE'S SOMETHING... *STRANGE* ABOUT HIM. EMMA CAN'T "READ" HIM--
--AND CEREBRA'S NOT REGISTERING HIM AS A MUTANT, EITHER.
WHY ME, THEN? I'M NOT A DETECTIVE, ORORO.
NO, BUT YOU HAVE CERTAIN QUALITIES MANY OF OUR X-COLLEAGUES LACK.
I DO?
SUCH AS?
TACT, FOR ONE. AND A SENSE OF EMPATHY.
WHICH WILL PROVE INVALUABLE SINCE...WELL...
...I'M SURE I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU WHAT A VOLATILE SITUATION THIS IS, KURT. IF A MUTANT *DID* KILL THIRTEEN HUMAN CHILDREN...
I UNDERSTAND, ORORO.
I KNOW YOU DO, KURT.
WHICH IS WHAT I ASSURED YOUR CONTACT AT METRO-GENERAL...

I'M *CHRISTINE PALMER*, MR. WAGNER. ONE OF THE NIGHT NURSES HERE AT METRO-GENERAL. I WAS ON DUTY WHEN IT...
...WHEN THE INCIDENT HAPPENED.
I...
THANK YOU FOR MEETING ME, NURSE PALMER.
IT'S CHRISTINE--PLEASE.
REMEMBER WHY YOU'RE HERE. OR--AT LEAST--YOUR NAME.
AND I'M KURT.
IF YOU'LL COME THIS WAY--KURT--DR. CHILDS ASKED ME TO SHOW YOU AROUND.
DR. CHILDS?
THE SUPERVISING PHYSICIAN IN CHARGE OF THE CHILDREN'S PSYCHIATRIC WARD.
YOU'LL BE MEETING HIM SHORTLY, BUT IN THE MEANTIME, I'M MEANT TO INTRODUCE YOU TO...
...BARNEY FRANKS.
HI, BARNEY.
CHRISSY.
THIS IS KURT WAGNER, BARNEY. HE'S TRYING TO HELP US FIGURE OUT WHAT...
...WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CHILDREN.
LOUNGE

KURT WAGNER. YOU'RE...
...YOU'RE *NIGHTCRAWLER,* FROM THE *X-MEN?*
WHY DON'T I SEE IF I CAN TRACK DOWN DR. CHILDS, Hm?
I WAS HOPING, MR. FRANKS, THAT YOU COULD--
I ALREADY TOLD THE POLICE AND THE F.B.I. EVERYTHING I KNOW.
YES, I-- I'VE READ THE REPORTS.
THEN YOU KNOW WHAT I DO.
ACTUALLY... NO.
I DON'T KNOW, FOR INSTANCE, WHY A MAN--WHO IN TWELVE YEARS OF WORKING AS A SECURITY GUARD HAS *NEVER* TAKEN AN UNSCHEDULED BREAK--DECIDED TO DO EXACTLY THAT.
AFTER TWELVE YEARS.

WHY THAT NIGHT, MR. FRANKS?
YOU WERE STUDYING TO BE A *PRIEST* ONCE, ISN'T THAT RIGHT? DIDN'T I READ THAT ABOUT YOU SOMEWHERE?
...YES.
BARN
SO YOU BELIEVE--OR, AT LEAST, USED TO BELIEVE--IN THINGS LIKE...
...FORGIVENESS?
I STILL DO, YES.

EVEN IF...
...AREN'T THERE SOME THINGS-- SOME ACTS--THAT ARE *UNFORGIVABLE?*
DO YOU MEAN...
...THE SUFFERING OF CHILDREN?
YES.
THE DEATH OF CHILDREN?
YES.
GOD, YES!
MR. FRANKS...
...IF YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CHILDREN...WHY-- OR HOW--THEY DIED...
DO YOU BELIEVE IN EVIL, MR. WAGNER? *TRUE* EVIL?
EXPLAIN SOMETHING TO ME, *NIGHTCRAWLER...*

...DID YOU COME HERE TO HELP US UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CHILDREN OR TO *BROWBEAT* MY STAFF?
D-DR. CHILDS, I... I...
IT'S ALL RIGHT, BARNEY. IT'S NOT *YOUR* FAULT MR. WAGNER'S TRYING TO GET...
...WHAT'S THE PHRASE?...
...BLOOD FROM A STONE.
YOU'RE *THROUGH* HERE, BARNEY. WHY DON'T YOU WAIT FOR ME DOWNSTAIRS IN THE GARAGE?
YES, DR. CHILDS.
KURT, THIS IS--
AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, MR. WAGNER, I AM LESS THAN THRILLED THAT YOU AND THE X-MEN HAVE *INSINUATED* THEIR WAY INTO THIS INVESTIGATION.
WHY, DOCTOR?
BECAUSE YOU'RE DISTURBING MY ALREADY OVERBURDENED STAFF--
--AND BECAUSE I DON'T THINK YOU'LL DISCOVER ANYTHING WE, OURSELVES, COULDN'T IN TIME--
--AND BECAUSE I THINK THE IDEA OF EXPOSING A CHILD--PARTICULARLY ONE AS TRAUMATIZED AS SETH WALKER IS--TO SOMEONE OF YOUR APPEARANCE--
IT'S ALL RIGHT, DOCTOR, I'LL BE THERE WITH MR. WAGNER.

AND AFTERWARDS YOU'LL DRAFT ME A REPORT, CHRISTINE? DETAILING THEIR MEETING?
OF COURSE, DOCTOR.
MR. WAGNER--
--GOODNIGHT.
IS HE ALWAYS THAT NICE?
DR. CHILDS?
HE COMES OFF A BIT COLD, I KNOW, BUT HE'S COMPLETELY DEVOTED TO THE CHILDREN IN HIS PROTECTION. HE FAIRLY WORSHIPS THEM, MR. WAGNER.
I'M SURE.
PLEASE, NURSE PALMER-- IT'S KURT.
AND I THINK I'D VERY MUCH LIKE TO MEET SETH NOW, IF THAT'S POSSIBLE.

KEEP IN MIND THAT EVEN BEFORE THE INCIDENT SETH WAS ALWAYS WITHDRAWN. PENSIVE.
AND SINCE?
HE HASN'T SPOKEN A WORD. EVEN THOUGH HE WANTS TO, I KNOW IT.
DESPITE ALL OUR BEST EFFORTS, HE JUST...STAYS IN HIS ROOM, WORKING ON...
WELL, YOU'LL SEE.
HELLO, SETH, HOW ARE YOU?
YOU HAVE A VISITOR, SETH.
HI, SETH...

SETH?
IT'S ALL RIGHT, MY FRIEND. I'M ONLY TRYING--
SETH! WHAT IS IT, WHAT'S WRONG?
BUT I KNOW.
THE WAY I LOOK TERRIFIES HIM.
BAMF!

BAMF!
ORORO--
--IT'S KURT ON THE X-LINK. ARE YOU THERE?

KURT... I WAS *JUST* THINKING ABOUT YOU.
HOW ARE THINGS GOING AT METRO-GENERAL?
TERRIBLY, STORM. THIS WAS AN *AWFUL* IDEA.
WHAT? WHY?
ORDER OF IMPORTANCE OR ALPHABETICALLY?
TO BEGIN WITH, I'VE JUST *TRAUMATIZED* SETH MORE THAN HE ALREADY WAS--
--LOUIS CHILDS, THE DOCTOR IN CHARGE, IS SUSPICIOUS OF OUR MOTIVES FOR BEING HERE--
--ON TOP OF WHICH--
--I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'M LOOKING--
HANG ON...
WHAT IS IT, KURT? DID YOU FIND--?
HOOFPRINTS, ORORO. BURNED INTO THE ROOF. LEADING...
...FROM THIS BUILDING'S ROOF TO...
...THE NEXT?

BAMF!
KURT?
--SORRY, I JUST TELEPORTED TO THE NEXT BUILDING'S ROOF TO SEE IF...
...THEY *DO* CONTINUE, YES.
WHAT, THE HOOFPRINTS?
YES, BUT--
--WHAT COULD HAVE *MADE* THEM, ORORO?
AS THEY LEAPT FROM BUILDING TO BUILDING LIKE...LIKE A STONE SKIPPING WATER...
DO YOU THINK THEY'RE LINKED TO THE DEATHS? TO SETH?
...
KURT, ARE YOU THERE? WHAT ARE YOU DOING NOW?
TRACKING THE PRINTS, OF COURSE, JUMPING ACROSS THE ROOFTOPS...
...FOLLOWING THE SAME PATH THEY--WHOEVER OR WHATEVER *"THEY"* ARE--FOLLOWED.
...I'LL LET YOU GO, THEN. BUT CALL WHEN YOU FIND OUT WHERE THEY END.
STORM OUT.

THE DAKOTA BUILDING...
...WHERE THE PRINTS END ABRUPTLY, VANISHING INTO...
...WHAT? *INTO* THE BUILDING?
ONE OF NEW YORK'S MOST EXCLUSIVE ADDRESSES? WHERE SOME OF THE CITY'S OLDEST AND WEALTHIEST FAMILIES LIVE?
AND NOW, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, FOR MY BEST SPIDER-MAN IMPERSONATION...

MEIN GOTT, THAT'S--
DR. CHILDS!
UH-OH.
THE GUARD FROM METRO-GENERAL, BARNEY FRANKS, YELLING FOR--
DR. LOUIS CHILDS!

BLEND INTO THE SHADOWS, KURT, SO THAT NEITHER CHILDS NOR BARNEY WILL SEE--
--YOU.
YOU *LIED* TO ME, CHILDS! YOU SAID THEY WOULDN'T BE *HURT!* YOU SAID THEY'D BE *ALL RIGHT!*
BARNEY, BARNEY, BARNEY...
TAKE YOUR MONEY BACK, DOCTOR! THEIR BLOOD IS ON *YOUR* HANDS NOW!

THAT'S QUITE ENOUGH, BARNEY.
I TRULY HAD SUCH HOPES FOR YOU...
...NOW GONE UP IN SMOKE.
WHA... WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME?
D-DR. CHILDS?
WHY...
WHY IS IT SO--
--SO *HOT?*

NO, DR. CHILDS, PLEASE DON'T!
DON'T-- NO--
--NO!
MY GOD--HE'S BURNING UP!
AND THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO!
TO BE CONTINUED!

MARVEL

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AGUIRRE-SACASA
ROBERTSON
FAUCHER

NIGHTCRAWLER™

LAND
Ryan
J-Po

He's your best friend *and* the monster that lives under your bed! And he must go where the other X-Men won't—into the shadows that have always called to him!

PREVIOUSLY

NIGHTCRAWLER

"THE DEVIL INSIDE"

Kurt Wagner, a.k.a. NIGHTCRAWLER of the X-MEN, has been given a daunting assignment by his teammate STORM: he must investigate the inexplicable, gruesome deaths of thirteen children at Metro-General Hospital. Problem is, the room they were in was locked the whole time!

Based only on the testimonies of the security guard on duty that night and a fourteenth child who mysteriously survived, Kurt must figure out how, why, and by whom this heinous crime was committed.

Once at Metro-General Hospital, Kurt finds more than he bargained for–including redheaded knockout/night nurse CHRISTINE PALMER. The security guard, BARNEY FRANKS, tells him little but seems racked by guilt. The surviving little boy, SETH WALKER, is too terrified by Kurt's demonic appearance to talk to him. And a sinister doctor, LOUIS CHILDS, seems determined to stand in Kurt's way.

On the roof of the hospital, Kurt finds his first clue: hoof marks that seem *burned* into the tar. He follows the trail from rooftop to rooftop, working his way across town…all the way to the infamous Dakota Building. Inside one of the apartments, at a cocktail party among other wealthy New Yorkers, is none other than Dr. Childs.

The party is suddenly interrupted by yells from the street–Barney Franks calling for Dr. Childs. He accuses the doctor of causing the children's deaths, but before he can say much more than that, Franks spontaneously bursts into flames! Kurt watches in horror as the man burns before his eyes…

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THE QUESTION I GET ASKED MOST OFTEN (EVEN MORE THAN *"WHERE DO YOU GET THREE-TOED SHOES?"*) IS: *"SO WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE AN X-MAN?"*
THE ANSWER CHANGES, OF COURSE, BUT RIGHT NOW--AT THIS MOMENT--
--IT'S A LOT LIKE JUMPING OFF THE DAKOTA BUILDING IN NEW YORK CITY TO TRY TO SAVE A MAN WHO'S BURNING TO DEATH.
THE DEVIL INSIDE PART TWO
THE KNOTTED ROPE
ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA WRITER
DARICK ROBERTSON PENCILER
WAYNE FAUCHER INKER
AVALON'S MATT MILLA COLORS
VC'S CHRIS ELIOPOULOS LETTERS
STEPHANIE MOORE & SEAN RYAN ASSISTANT EDITORS
MIKE MARTS EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF
DAN BUCKLEY PUBLISHER

BAMF
BAMF
IT HURTS! OH LORD, IT HURTS!
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
HELP HIM!

RIGHT.
BAMF
THE CENTRAL PARK RESERVOIR--
BAMF
--TO HOPEFULLY--
--DOUSE--
--THESE--

--FLAMES?
STILL BURNING...?
BURNING... ME?
UNDERWATER?
FRANKS IS TERRIFIED--CLUTCHING ONTO ME--LEAVING ME AN AWFUL CHOICE--
--TO BURN OR TO DROWN WITH HIM.
OR...
...OR...

WHA--?
FRANKS-- *PUSHING* ME AWAY?
DOESN'T HE REALIZE I'M HIS *ONLY* HOPE?
FROM READING THE FILE ABOUT HIM THAT STORM GAVE ME EARLIER, I KNOW:
BARNEY FRANKS AND HIS WIFE HAVE BEEN MARRIED SEVENTEEN YEARS AND HAVE THREE CHILDREN, TWO BOYS AND A GIRL.
APART FROM THE MATTER OF HIM LEAVING THE MURDERED CHILDREN UNATTENDED FOR FOUR MINUTES, FRANKS SEEMED A DECENT, HARDWORKING MAN.
CONFIRMED, AT THE END, WHEN HE DID EVERYTHING HE COULD TO KEEP ME FROM *BURNING* WITH HIM.
WHILE I...
...I...

I COULDN'T SAVE HIM, ORORO.
HE PUSHED FREE AND I... I LET HIM GO. LET HIM...BURN TO DEATH.
YOU DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE, KURT.
FROM WHAT YOU'RE TELLING ME, FRANKS WOULD'VE DIED NO MATTER WHAT YOU'D DONE.
HE WAS *ALIVE*, ORORO--HE WAS *FINE*--AND THEN HE JUST...CAUGHT FIRE, IN FRONT OF THE DAKOTA BUILDING. FOR NO REASON AT ALL.
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT...SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION?
I DON'T *KNOW* WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT.
I THINK DR. CHILDS--
--OR MAYBE THE OTHER PEOPLE IN THE APARTMENT LOOKING DOWN ON FRANKS--
--I THINK THEY MIGHT HAVE *DONE* SOMETHING TO HIM.
SOMETHING *META* OR SOMETHING *MAGICAL?*
SHOULD I PUT YOU IN TOUCH WITH STEPHEN STRANGE? IF THIS FIRE *WAS* MYSTICAL, HE'S OUR BEST RESOURCE.
ACTUALLY, ORORO...
...THERE'S SOMEONE ELSE I'D LIKE TO TRY *FIRST.*
AMBULANCE
1087
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LIMBO
OF *COURSE* MY EX-GIRLFRIEND-*SLASH*-FOSTER-SISTER *WOULD* LIVE IN LIMBO.
AMANDA SEFTON...MAGIK... I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT SHE CALLS HERSELF THESE DAYS, BUT SHE'S NEARLY AS ACCOMPLISHED A MYSTIC AS STEPHEN STRANGE.

IF ANYONE WOULD CALL THIS LIV--
WAIT, WHAT'S...?
INTERESSSTING. VERY, VERY...
...INTERESSSTING.
HE'SSSS NOT DEAD, BROTHER...
I'M NOT, N--
...NO, AND HE'SSS NOT MAGICAL, THOUGH HE LOOKSSS AND SSSMELLSSS LIKE A DEMON.
I'LL TRY NOT TO BE OFFENDED BY THAT COMMENT.
YOU SSSSHOULD NOT BE HERE...
...IN THISSS PLACE OF THE DEAD.
I'M HERE TO SEE YOUR... UHM...
...MISTRESS?
AND YOU ARE...?
AND WE SSSHOULD LET YOU PASSSS BECAUSSSE...?
BRAD, ROGER--

--THAT'S *ENOUGH,* BOYS.
KURT, DARLING.
IT'S BEEN *AGES,* IT FEELS LIKE.
AMANDA, HI. YOU...
...YOU LOOK WONDERFUL.
FLATTERER.
SO...
WILL YOU TELL YOUR *PETS* TO LET ME PASS?
OR DO I NEED A SECRET PASSWORD?

HOW WAS YOUR TRIP? FOR A TELEPORTER, IT MUST BE--
--IT WAS FINE.
TRAVELING BETWEEN DIMENSIONS ALWAYS LEAVES ME FEELING...A BIT QUEASY.
MM-HMM.
THAT MUST BE WHY YOU NEVER COME VISIT.
AMANDA...
OH, SETTLE DOWN, KURT, I'M ONLY TEASING.
THOUGH, REALLY--
--WHY DON'T YOU?
...
TOO MUCH HISTORY BETWEEN US?
WHICH BEGS THE QUESTION--
--WHY NOW?
OR LET ME GUESS...
YOU WANT MY HELP WITH THAT LITTLE BOY.

DON'T LOOK SO SURPRISED, KURT.
YOUR LIFE'S AN *OPEN BOOK* TO ME, HAVEN'T YOU REALIZED YET?
HOW...?
SOME PEOPLE USE *"GOOGLE"* TO KEEP TRACK OF THEIR *EXES*, OTHER PEOPLE USE CRYSTAL BALLS...
...I USE *BOTH.*
THIRTEEN CHILDREN *DIED*, AMANDA--*VIOLENTLY*--AND NO ONE KNOWS WHY OR HOW.
THEN THE GUARD WHO WAS WATCHING THEM BURNED TO DEATH RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME.
SETH--THE ONE BOY WHO SURVIVED--WON'T TALK TO *ANYONE.*
EVEN THOUGH IT FELT LIKE--
--IT *FEELS* LIKE--
--PART OF HIM *WANTS* TO TALK, BUT HE'S SCARED.
...
AS THOUGH HE WERE CONSCIOUSLY *WILLING* HIMSELF TO *NOT* TALK, IF SUCH A THING'S POSSIBLE.
THAT SOUNDS *AWFUL.*
ACCORDING TO HIS NURSE--NURSE PALMER--HE JUST SITS IN HIS ROOM ALL DAY... SCULPTING CLAY FIGURINES. PLAYING WITH A PIECE OF ROPE.
REALLY?
KNOTTED ROPE?
YES.

AND YOUR SENSE-- JUST TO BE CLEAR, KURT-- IS THAT *"DARKER FORCES"* ARE AT WORK HERE? MAGIC?
MAYBE. OR THE--
--THE *OCCULT.*
HM.
WELL, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN BY *"OCCULT,"* BUT MAGIC--A LOT OF MAGIC--INVOLVES *BINDING.* TYING THINGS TOGETHER--
--OR UNTYING THEM.
MAYBE--AND MIND YOU, THIS IS A *BIG* MAYBE--SETH'S A MAGICIAN WITHOUT EVEN *KNOWING* HE IS.
REALLY?
WELL, IT IS *POSSIBLE.* MOST PEOPLE *LEARN* MAGIC--*STUDY* IT--BUT SOME KNOW IT INNATELY.
MAYBE HE'S TIED KNOTS INTO THAT ROPE TO MAKE SURE HE KEEPS HIMSELF FROM TALKING. A *LOCKING* SPELL TO ENSURE HIS SECRETS REMAIN...SECRET.
MAGIC, AMANDA?
IN A PIECE OF STRING?

IT'S THE SAME PRINCIPLE AS...
...WELL, TALISMANS. OR MAGIC WANDS, IF YOU LIKE. A PHYSICAL OBJECT THAT HELPS WITH SPELL-WEAVING.
NOW, KURT...
...***I'LL*** TELL YOU ABOUT BINDING SPELLS...
...IF ***YOU'LL*** TELL ME ABOUT--
--NURSE PALMER, WAS IT?
KRA-KOOM!

SCARY, ISN'T IT? THE LIGHTNING?
...
IF YOU'RE WONDERING ABOUT THE WAY I LOOK...
...IT'S BECAUSE I'M USING SOMETHING THAT'S CALLED AN *IMAGE-INDUCER.* TO CHANGE MY APPEARANCE. TO KEEP YOU FROM BEING SCARED.
SO...
...THIS PIECE OF STRING.
COULD I TRY SOMETHING?
UNTYING ONE OF ITS KNOTS?
THERE.
NOW--YOU CAN TALK AGAIN, IF YOU WANT TO.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
YES.
FINALLY.
WHERE DID YOU LEARN TO DO THAT, SETH? DID SOMEONE TEACH YOU?
NO. I JUST... KNEW.
WELL, IT'S A GOOD TRICK. DO YOU DO IT OFTEN?
ONLY WHEN I NEED TO.
DID YOU DO IT THE NIGHT YOUR FRIENDS WERE... WERE...?
YES.

WHY?
'CAUSE I FELT SOMETHING HAPPENING...
WHAT, SETH?
I...
I STARTED GETTING REALLY HOT--WE ALL DID--AND...
...IT WAS LIKE SOMETHING WAS GROWING INSIDE ME, IN MY STOMACH.
...WHAT?
AND I JUST TIED A KNOT IN THE ROPE--
--THIS ONE--
--AND THAT'S ALL I REMEMBER ABOUT THAT NIGHT. EXCEPT...
...THAT I COULDN'T SAVE THEM.
I MADE THE OTHER KNOTS AFTER IT HAPPENED 'CAUSE I DIDN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THAT NIGHT AND 'CAUSE DR. CHILDS KEPT ASKING ME QUESTIONS...
DR. CHILDS DID?
WHAT KIND OF--?
THAT'S ENOUGH!

THIS INTERVIEW IS *OVER,* MR. WAGNER.
DR. CHILDS...!
I JUST PHONED THE F.B.I.
WHICH, IT TURNS OUT, *DIDN'T* ASK YOU X-PEOPLE TO HELP WITH OUR INVESTIGATION.
I NEVER SAID THEY HAD.
I KNOW, I *ASSUMED.*
AN IMBECILIC MISTAKE I'M RECTIFYING *RIGHT NOW.*
DR. CHILDS, PLEASE...
SOMEONE HAS TO LOOK OUT FOR SETH--
THAT SOMEONE IS--*ME.*
...
WITH ALL RESPECT, DOCTOR, YOU *AREN'T* SETH'S LEGAL GUARDIAN.
NO, MR. WAGNER, HE ISN'T.
I AM.

I'M MEREDITH WALKER, SETH'S AUNT.
N-NO, SHE'S NOT...
SETH--
YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE ME, SETH, BECAUSE YOUR FATHER AND I RARELY SPOKE.
HE CUT ME OUT OF HIS LIFE WHEN I MOVED TO EUROPE AND MARRIED A MAN HE...DIDN'T APPROVE OF.
EVER SINCE THE CITY PLACED SETH IN OUR CARE, WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR ANY SURVIVING RELATIVES.
AFTER FOUR YEARS OF SEARCHING...WE FINALLY FOUND MRS. WALKER, LIVING RIGHT HERE IN NEW YORK CITY.
I MOVED BACK...TWO YEARS AGO THIS JUNE, AFTER MY HUSBAND'S DEATH. I KEPT THINKING I'D RECONNECT WITH MY BROTHER AND HIS FAMILY, BUT...
...TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, MR. WAGNER, I'D GOTTEN USED TO NOT HAVING THEM IN MY LIFE.
OF COURSE, IF I'D KNOWN THAT SETH'S MOTHER AND FATHER HAD *DIED*, AND THAT HE'D BEEN REMANDED TO THE STATE, I WOULD'VE SOUGHT HIM OUT.
I *TRULY* HAD NO IDEA...

...
YOU CAN SEE, THEN, MR. WAGNER, THAT SETH *WILL* BE LOOKED AFTER PROPERLY. AND SINCE NEITHER YOU NOR THE X-MEN HAVE JURISDICTION HERE--
--I'LL THANK YOU TO *LEAVE.*
WAIT--
--PLEASE--
GOODBYE, MR. WAGNER.
WHA--?

WHAT WAS THAT? THAT--*FLASH?*
MY IMAGINATION OR...
...*WHAT?*
EVERY INSTINCT-- EVERY CELL IN MY BODY--IS TELLING ME THAT SOMETHING TERRIBLY, *TERRIBLY* WRONG IS--
--HAPPENING HERE. BUT--
--WHAT CAN *I* DO--
MR. WAGNER?
?
KURT, IT'S ME--CHRISTINE PALMER. ARE YOU...?
...IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?

I...
I'M FINE. YOU SCARED ME, IS ALL.
KURT, THERE'S...
...THERE'S SOMETHING I THINK YOU SHOULD SEE. SOMETHING... *UNNATURAL.*
AT THE START OF MY SHIFT, I WENT DOWN TO OUR MORGUE, TO...TO PREPARE THE CHILDREN'S BODIES FOR AUTOPSY--TO SEE IF THE CAUSE OF THEIR DEATHS COULD BE DISCOVERED THAT WAY--AND...
WHAT, CHRISTINE?
I...
...I HAVEN'T TOLD *ANYONE* ABOUT THIS, NOT EVEN DR. CHILDS. BUT...
WHAT, CHRISTINE?
WHAT DID YOU FIND?
BUT NURSE PALMER DOESN'T SAY ANYTHING ELSE UNTIL WE REACH THE HOSPITAL'S BOWELS. THEN...
MORGUE

I CAME DOWN HERE AND...
...ALL THIRTEEN OF THE MUTILATED BODIES HAD *BURNED UP*--WERE PILES OF *ASH.* BARNEY'S BODY, TOO, WHAT LITTLE WAS LEFT OF IT.
HOW THEY BURNED TO NOTHING DOWN HERE, IN THEIR AIRTIGHT CABINETS, WITHOUT A SINGLE FIRE ALARM GOING OFF, WITHOUT ANYONE NOTICING...
...WELL, YOU TELL ME, MR. WAGNER.
F
C
B
A
D
...MEIN GOTT.
WHAT'S *HAPPENING* HERE?
TO BE CONTINUED...

MARVEL

3

AGUIRRE-SACASA
ROBERTSON
FAUCHER

NIGHTCRAWLER™

LAND
Ryan
J-Po

He's your best friend *and* the monster that lives under your bed! And he must go where the other X-Men won't—into the shadows that have always called to him!

PREVIOUSLY

NIGHTCRAWLER

"THE DEVIL INSIDE"

PART ONE OF FOUR

Kurt Wagner, a.k.a. NIGHTCRAWLER of the X-MEN, has been given a daunting assignment: he must investigate the inexplicable, gruesome deaths of thirteen children at Metro-General hospital. Problem is, the room they were in was locked the whole time! Based only on the testimonies of the security guard on duty that night and a fourteenth child who mysteriously survived, Kurt must figure out how, why, and by whom this heinous crime was committed.

Once at Metro-General hospital, Kurt finds more than he bargained for–including redheaded knockout/night nurse CHRISTINE PALMER. The security guard, BARNEY FRANKS, tells him little but seems racked by guilt. The surviving little boy, SETH WALKER, is terrified by Kurt's demonic appearance and won't speak. And a sinister doctor, LOUIS CHILDS, seems determined to stand in Kurt's way.

On the roof of the hospital, Kurt finds his first clue: hoof marks that seem *burned* into the tar. He follows the trail from rooftop to rooftop...all the way to the infamous Dakota Building. Inside one of the apartments, at a cocktail party among other wealthy New Yorkers, is none other than Dr. Childs.

The party is suddenly interrupted by yells from the street–Barney Franks calling for Dr. Childs. He accuses the doctor of causing the children's deaths, but before he can say much more, Franks spontaneously bursts into flames!

PART TWO OF FOUR

In an effort to save the burning guard, Kurt teleports Barney into the Central Park reservoir, but somehow, Barney remains aflame! Though Kurt risks drowning or being burned by the otherworldly fire himself, Barney pushes him away–his final act before dying.

Now sure that mystical forces are at work, Kurt enlists the help of his old sweetheart AMANDA SEFTON, a.k.a. MAGICK. In her gloomy castle at the heart of the infernal dimension of Limbo, Kurt tells Amanda about Seth Walker–how he never speaks and how he's always fiddling with a knotted piece of rope. Amanda surmises that Seth must somehow be casting a locking spell to prevent himself from talking–perhaps using the rope. Ergo, if Kurt unties the rope, Seth will speak.

Amanda's advice works, and Seth reveals that he ties knots in the rope to keep secrets–and that he tied one the night his friends died. Before he can explain further, Dr. Childs–and a woman claiming to be Seth's legal guardian–arrives to throw Kurt out. As he reluctantly goes, Kurt sees a flash–a horrifying demon in place of the woman who has come to take Seth away.

Before Kurt can respond to his vision, Nurse Palmer leads him to the hospital morgue, where they see that the bodies of the thirteen dead children have all mysteriously been reduced to ash.

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ON MY SIGNAL, MUTANTS...
...AND *PLEASE*--DON'T STAND ON CEREMONY.
FEEL FREE, IN OTHER WORDS...
...TO DRAW *BLOOD.*

THE DEVIL INSIDE PART THREE

FOURTEEN DEMONS

ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA WRITER | DARICK ROBERTSON PENCILER | WAYNE FAUCHER INKER | AVALON'S MATT MILLA COLORS | VC'S CORY PETIT LETTERS | STEPHANIE MOORE & SEAN RYAN ASSISTANT EDITORS | MIKE MARTS EDITOR | JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF | DAN BUCKLEY PUBLISHER

I THINK THIS IS YOURS, HANK. YOU WANTED THE *TURKEY*, RIGHT?
UHNNFF!
I'M BORED. IS ANYONE ELSE HERE BORED? THIS IS *DEATHLY* BORING, ISN'T IT?

AHHFF!
WELL, NOW...
...THIS IS *SLIGHTLY* MORE INTRIGUING.
HYAFF!
LOOK WHO'S A BIG SHOW-OFF...
I'M IMPRESSED. YOU'VE GOTTEN BETTER SINCE THE LAST TIME WE--
WHA--!
MATCH!

EXIT
NICE WORK, KITTY.
UH, THANKS, STORM.
WAIT, ARE WE IN *TROUBLE?*
KURT, MAY I HAVE A WORD?
OOOOOO...
...NIGHTCRAWLER'S GONNA GET IT...
OF COURSE, ORORO.
NOT YOU, JUST ME.
BECAUSE I SHOULD BE WORKING ON MY *"DEMON MURDER"* CASE, AND NOT...
CAN I SHOWER FIRST?

I'M ASSUMING THAT'S FOR ME.
I HAVEN'T GIVEN UP ON SETH, YOU KNOW.
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE THINKING.
I'M JUST... TAKING A TIME-OUT.
CLEARING YOUR HEAD. I UNDERSTAND...
IT'S GOTTEN... TRICKY, ORORO. *TRICKIER.*
I'VE BEEN MORE OR LESS BARRED FROM THE HOSPITAL...THE DEAD CHILDREN'S BODIES WERE DESTROYED BEFORE AUTOPSIES COULD BE PERFORMED...THERE'S...
...THERE'S NOT MUCH TO GO ON.
CAN I DO ANYTHING TO HELP? I MEAN...
...I *AM* A GODDESS.

...
CHRISTINE PALMER, ONE OF THE NURSES AT METRO-GENERAL--
I KNOW CHRISTINE.
--WELL, SHE GAVE ME COPIES OF THE DEAD CHILDREN'S MEDICAL RECORDS AND HISTORIES.
ALL OF THEM WERE ADMITTED TO METRO-GENERAL *AFTER* DR. CHILDS TOOK OVER THE CHILDREN'S PSYCHIATRIC WARD. ALL OF THEM WERE ORPHANS. ALL OF THEM WERE SPONSORED--THEIR *TREATMENT* WAS SPONSORED--BY WEALTHY NEW YORKERS. DOCTORS, ATTORNEYS, DIPLOMATS, THE HEADS OF FOUNDATIONS...
SOCIETY PEOPLE...
EXACTLY.
I GAVE HANK THEIR NAMES AND HE DID SOME DETECTIVE WORK FOR ME...
AND?
DID HE TURN UP ANYTHING INTERESTING?
IF YOU CONSIDER THE FACT THAT EACH OF THE SPONSORS LIVES IN THE DAKOTA BUILDING--WHERE DR. CHILDS' APARTMENT IS, WHERE BARNEY FRANKS SPONTANEOUSLY COMBUSTED--
--THEN YES, *VERY.*
YOU KNOW... HISTORIC OR NOT, I'VE NEVER MUCH CARED FOR THE DAKOTA. THE MAINTENANCE FEES ARE *RIDICULOUSLY* HIGH AND NONE OF THE APARTMENTS GET ANY SUNLIGHT...
WHEN I VISITED IT, THE ENTIRE BUILDING FELT...
...EVIL, SOMEHOW. DISTURBED. POLLUTED.
HMN.
WHAT'S NEXT, THEN? (ASSUMING, OF COURSE, THAT YOUR "TIME-OUT" IS OVER.)
WELL, IF CHRISTINE KEEPS HER WORD AND PROMISES TO TURN A BLIND EYE...

"...I'LL TRY VISITING SETH AGAIN TONIGHT."
YOU CAN COME OUT OF THE SHADOWS, MR. WAGNER, I KNOW YOU'RE THERE.
YOU'VE BEEN IN THERE FOR...ALMOST HALF AN HOUR.
...
THE WAY I LOOK...DOESN'T *SCARE* YOU?
NOT ANYMORE. YOU ONLY LOOK BAD ON THE *OUTSIDE.* ON THE INSIDE, YOU'RE...*OKAY,* I GUESS.
WHAT...
...WHAT ARE THOSE STATUES, SETH?
THE ONES HE'S BEEN MAKING SINCE THE *MURDERS.*

THEY'RE NOT STATUES, THEY'RE... JARS, I GUESS.
JARS?
I'M ALMOST FINISHED. TWELVE DONE, TWO MORE TO GO...
JARS FOR WHAT?
ONE FOR EACH OF MY FRIENDS WHO DIED, AND ONE...
...ONE FOR WHEN *I* DIE.
WHAT?
WHY...WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT, SETH? WHY WOULD YOU EVEN *THINK* IT?

...
YOU REALLY WANNA KNOW, MR. WAGNER?
I...
...YES.
JARS TO HOLD *WHAT,* SETH?
THE DEVIL.
THE...
HE'S *REAL,* MR. WAGNER. I'VE SEEN HIM. IN MY...
...IN MY HEAD. IN MY *DREAMS.*
HE HURT MY FRIENDS, HE KILLED THEM, AND NOW...
...I THINK HE WANTS TO HURT *ME* NOW.
SETH...
...I WON'T LET ANYONE HURT YOU, I PROMISE, BUT...
...YOU HAVE TO BE *HONEST* WITH ME ABOUT SOMETHING, ALL RIGHT?
DO YOU THINK DR. CHILDS...?
...DO YOU THINK *HE'S* THE DEVIL?
DR. CHILDS...?

BUT HE TAKES CARE OF US. HE TALKS TO US. HE BUYS US THINGS--
I KNOW HE DOES, SETH. STILL--
--AT LEAST HE *DID* WHEN WE WERE ALL ALIVE...
AND NOW?
DR. CHILDS IS A GOOD PERSON, MR. WAGNER.
THAT'S HOW IT *SEEMS*, YES, BUT SOMETIMES...
...
...BEFORE I BECAME AN X-MAN, SETH, I WAS PART OF A CIRCUS. I LIVED WITH A FAMILY, I HAD A SISTER AND A BROTHER...
...AND ONE DAY, WITHOUT WARNING, MY BROTHER STARTED *KILLING* THE CHILDREN IN ONE OF THE TOWNS WE WERE VISITING...
HE DID?
BECAUSE THE CHILDREN WEREN'T *REALLY* CHILDREN, SETH. THEY *LOOKED* LIKE CHILDREN...
...BUT THEY WERE *DEMONS*. AND STEFAN, MY BROTHER, COULD SEE THROUGH THEIR DISGUISES.
DR. CHILDS *ISN'T* A DEMON, MR. WAGNER.
WHAT ABOUT YOUR *AUNT*, THEN?
IS SHE EVEN WHO SHE SAYS SHE IS?
I DUNNO, MR. WAGNER. SHE'S NICE, I GUESS, AND SHE TOOK ME TO LUNCH, AND WE TALKED ABOUT ME LEAVING METRO-GENERAL, BUT I'M NOT SURE--
KURT!

CHRISTINE...?
IT'S DR. CHILDS!
WHAT, HE'S HERE?
NO, HE'S OUT FRONT BEING-- BEING *ATTACKED!*
WE CALLED THE POLICE--CALLED SECURITY--BUT NO ONE CAN GET TO HIM AND--
--I THINK SHE'S KILLING HIM!
WHO IS?
MRS. WALKER--SETH'S AUNT!
...
STAY WITH SETH, CHRISTINE, WHILE I--
BAMF!
NO, WAIT, I WANNA...
...GO?

BAMF!
THERE. BEYOND THAT CROWD--
CHILDS!
WAGNER! YOU--
--YOU CAN'T CROSS THE CIRCLE!
CIRCLE? WHAT'S HE TALK--
--WAIT, THERE IS SOMETHING... BLOCKING ME?
UNDO THE CIRCLE, CHILDS...
...THEN WE'LL FREE OUR BROTHER...
...THE LAST OF THE FOURTEEN...
WAG...
...NER...
BUT I DON'T NEED TO CROSS THE CIRCLE.
BAMF!
I CAN--

MY GOD, SHE'S LIKE--!
HER *GRIP'S* LIKE--!
RRARARRGH!
RO
CHILDS--
--RIP YOUAPART TEAROUTYOUR HEART--
--GO! GET AWAY IF YOU CAN!
...THAT CHURCH...
WHAT'S HE SAYING?
...GET HER INSIDE THAT--
--CHURCH-- THERE--RIGHT.
KILL YOUCHILDSKILL YOUFORLYING TOUS--!
NO--

--PROBLEM.
BAMF!
GET SOME DISTANCE, KURT. WHATEVER'S HAPPENED TO MRS. WALKER, IT'S MADE HER--
...WHAT...?
...WHERE...?
HUH?
SHE LOOKS *TERRIFIED.* AS FRIGHTENED AS SETH DID WHEN WE FIRST MET.
...*HIS* HOUSE...
...*HIS* PRESENCE...
...N-N-N-N-N--
HORRIFIED-- AND LIKE A VOLCANO ABOUT TO--
NNOOOOOOOO!

EEAARGH!
OH...MY...
-GASP-
OH, GOD...
...OH...
MRS. WALKER--
...
WHY, THOUGH?
UNLESS...
INRI
"YOU WERE RIGHT TO BRING HER HERE TO *LIMBO*, KURT."

WHATEVER SHE'S BEEN THROUGH, MY MAGICS *SHOULD* MAKE HER FEEL BETTER.
I *HOPE.*
MRS. WALKER...?
OH, MAN, WHAT DO I EVEN CALL HER?
MRS. WALKER, THIS IS MY... UHM...
...THIS IS *AMANDA SEFTON.*
I DON'T WANT YOU TO BE AFRAID, BUT YOU'RE--
...INSIDE ME...
PARDON?
...THEY WERE INSIDE ME LIKE...
...LIKE SPIDERS-- LIKE *FLIES--* CRAWLING ACROSS MY SOUL...
WHAT WERE?
MRS. WALKER?
MY NAME'S SANDRA MANNING, NOT...NOT WHAT YOU'VE BEEN CALLING ME.
YOU'RE NAME *ISN'T* MEREDITH WALKER?
NO.
AND--SO-- YOU *DON'T* HAVE A NEPHEW NAMED SETH WALKER?
NO, MISTER... WHOEVER-YOU-ARE.
I DON'T HAVE *ANYONE.*
CUE THAT HAUNTING "TWILIGHT ZONE" THEME MUSIC...

I DON'T UNDERSTAND. WHEN DR. CHILDS INTRODUCED US--
CHILDS...
WAIT, WASN'T THAT...?
I THINK THAT WAS...
I DON'T EVEN HAVE TO ASK AMANDA TO USE HER MAGIC. SHE JUST DOES...
REMEMBER.
REMEMBER *EVERYTHING.*
...YES, THAT *WAS* HIS NAME.
HE...HE FOUND ME AT A SHELTER...HE FED ME, HE TOOK ME TO A HOTEL, CLEANED ME UP...HE BOUGHT ME NEW CLOTHES... HE...
...HE PUT THEM INSIDE ME. TO...CONTROL ME, MY BODY. TO MAKE ME...MAKE ME *PRETEND* I WAS THE BOY'S AUNT. BUT THEY...
...THEY WERE *TOO* STRONG, WAS THAT IT?
YES, THEY...THEY *ALMOST* BROKE FREE-- THEY *ATTACKED* CHILDS-- SO HE TRAPPED ME-- THEM--ALL OF US--IN A CIRCLE...
...UNTIL OUR EVER-ZEALOUS *CRAWLER OF THE NIGHT* HERE TELEPORTED YOU INTO A CHURCH, FORCING THEM FROM YOUR BODY LIKE ST. PATRICK CHASING THE SNAKES FROM IRELAND...
...OR JESUS DRIVING THE THIEVES FROM THE TEMPLE...

THERE WERE... *THIRTEEN* OF THEM INSIDE ME, FIGHTING TO GET OUT, FIGHTING EACH OTHER, GNASHING THEIR TEETH, *BITING* AND TEARING...
ENRAGED, I THINK, BECAUSE... BECAUSE THEY'RE DESPERATE FOR THEIR BROTHER...
...THE FOURTEENTH DEMON.
THIRTEEN DEMONS? FOURTEEN? THE SAME AS HOW MANY CHILDREN WERE...
I THINK, YES.
AMANDA...
...WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
WHEN THE WAR IN HEAVEN WAS FOUGHT--THE *GREAT* WAR--*FOURTEEN* ANGELS STOOD BY THE MORNING STAR'S SIDE.
THE...
MORNING STAR, KURT. THE SON OF DAWN. THE BRINGER OF LIGHT.
LUCIFER.
THAT *HAPPENED?* THAT WAR *ACTUALLY--?*
AND WHEN THE MORNING STAR *LOST*, AND WAS CAST DOWN, HE FELL INTO THE PIT, DRAGGING HIS FOURTEEN LIEUTENANTS DOWN WITH HIM...
...AND FOURTEEN ANGELS BECAME FOURTEEN DEMONS.

UH-*HUH.*
AND FOR THOSE OF US WHO COULDN'T STOMACH SITTING THROUGH THE RE-RELEASE OF *THE EXORCIST* A FEW YEARS BACK--
--YOU THINK THESE DEMONS... WHAT, *POSSESSED* YOU?
THEY WERE INSIDE ME, YES, MAKING ME DO THINGS *CHILDS* WANTED ME TO...
ALL RIGHT, ALLOWING THAT FOR THE MOMENT--
--WHY *THESE* SPECIFIC DEMONS, THEN? WHY NOT... OTHER, LESS HIGH-PROFILE ONES?
NO, KURT, IT *IS* THEM. SINCE YOUR VISIT, BRAD AND ROGER HAVE HEARD...*RUMORS* THAT SATAN'S MOST INNER CIRCLE HAS BEEN...*DISRUPTED,* SOMEHOW. *FREED* FROM HELL, EVEN.
BRAD AND ROGER... YOUR *TWO GAY PET SNAKES* HAVE HEARD *RUMORS?* ABOUT SATAN'S *MOST INNER CIRCLE?*
LIKE HIS BOOK CLUB, YOU MEAN?
JOKE ALL YOU WANT, KURT, BUT I KNOW THE REAL REASON YOU'RE BEING FUNNY IS BECAUSE YOU'RE *SCARED.*
OH?
YOU MEAN OF THE FOURTEEN DEMONS THAT POSSESSED MRS. MANNING?
NO, NOT FOURTEEN...
...*THIRTEEN.* YOU HAVEN'T BEEN LISTENING TO ME, MR. WAGNER.
CHILDS MANAGED TO FREE THIRTEEN OF THE FOURTEEN, BUT ONE'S STILL TRAPPED. HOWEVER THE FIRST THIRTEEN GOT OUT...THE LAST ONE *COULDN'T*--AND *STILL* CAN'T. HE'S NOT IN HELL ANYMORE, BUT HE *IS* LOCKED AWAY SOMEWHERE...
LOCKED?

OH, NO...
KURT?
SETH WALKER'S A *"LOCK,"* AMANDA, REMEMBER? SOMEHOW--EITHER THROUGH MAGIC OR A MUTANT ABILITY--HE SEEMS TO BE ABLE TO LOCK THINGS. ***BIND*** THEM...
CHILDREN'S WARD
DR. CHILDS, ARE YOU ALL--?
HAVE MY CAR BROUGHT AROUND BACK, NURSE PALMER.
THIRTEEN OF SETH'S FRIENDS DIED AT METRO-GENERAL...
...*I* WAS POSSESSED BY THIRTEEN DEMONS...
...LEAVING *ONE* UNACCOUNTED FOR...
"NO, AMANDA, *NOT* UNACCOUNTED FOR.
"TRAPPED."
DR. CHILDS...?
THERE'S BEEN A CHANGE IN PLANS, SETH. YOUR AUNT *WON'T* BE TAKING YOU FROM US, AFTER ALL...

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, KURT?
I'M SAYING...
WHAT IF FOURTEEN CHILDREN WERE SACRIFICED--OFFERED UP--TO SET FOURTEEN DEMONS FREE FROM HELL...
...AND THIRTEEN MADE IT OUT--BURST THROUGH THE CHILDREN'S SOULS AND BODIES--BUT ONE *DIDN'T?*
...INSTEAD, *I'LL* BE TAKING YOU AWAY FROM HERE.
W-WHERE, DOCTOR?
I'M SAYING...
...I THINK OUR FOURTEENTH DEMON'S TRAPPED INSIDE *SETH.*
WE'RE GOING TO A PRIVATE PLACE NEARBY, CHILD. WHERE WE'LL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE YOUR TREATMENT AWAY FROM ALL DISTRACTION AND INTERFERENCE.

AND WHERE WHATEVER YOU'RE KEEPING INSIDE YOU...
...WILL-- ONCE AND FOR ALL--BE *CUT FREE.*
TO BE CONCLUDED!

MARVEL

4

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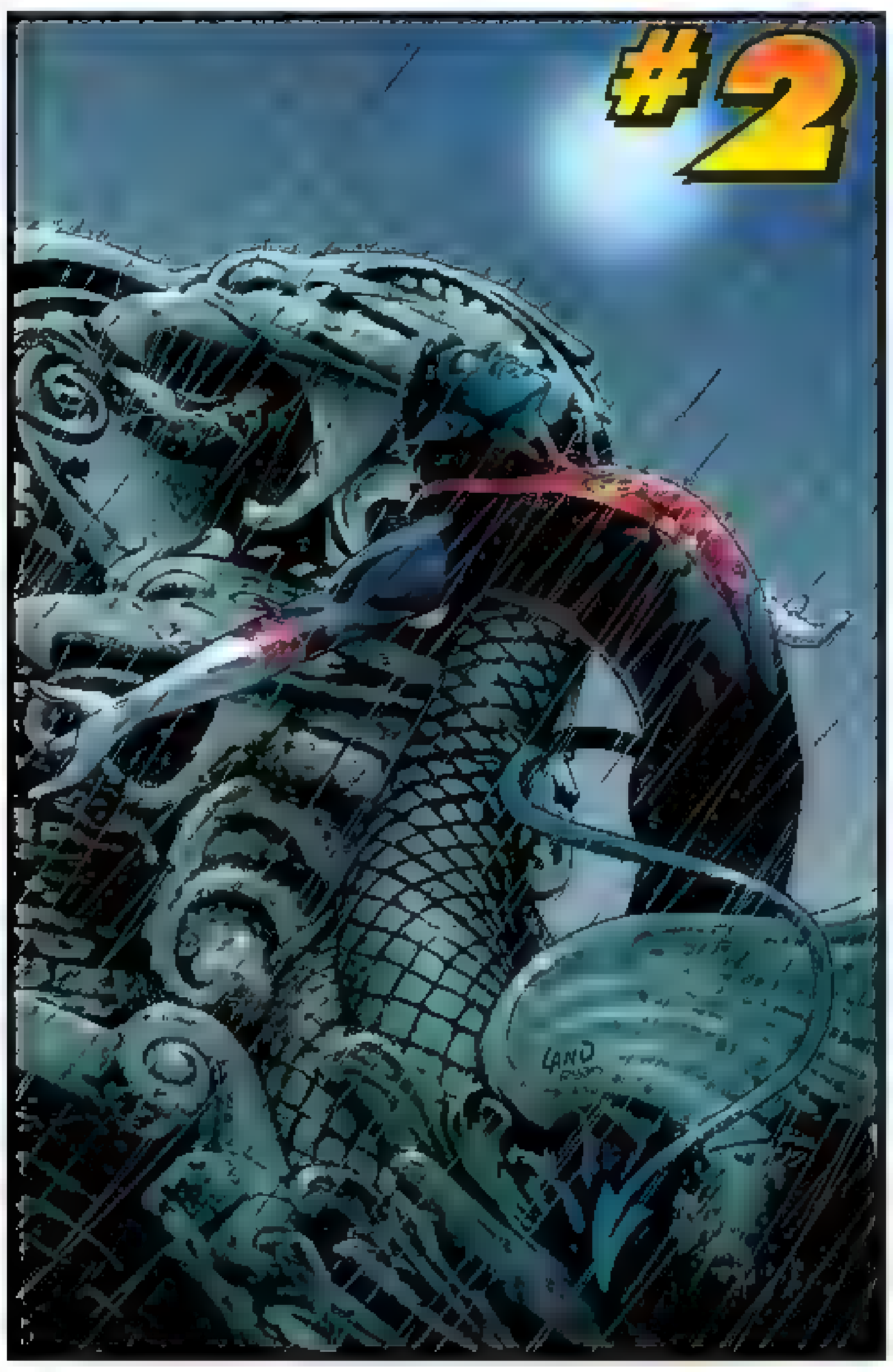
On the roof of the hospital, Kurt finds his first clue: hoof marks that seem *burned* into the tar. He follows the trail from rooftop to rooftop…all the way to the infamous Dakota Building. Inside one of the apartments, at a cocktail party among other wealthy New Yorkers, is none other than Dr. Childs.

The party is suddenly interrupted by yells from the street--Barney Franks calling for Dr. Childs. He accuses the doctor of causing the children's deaths, but before he can say much more, Franks spontaneously bursts into flames!



PART TWO OF FOUR

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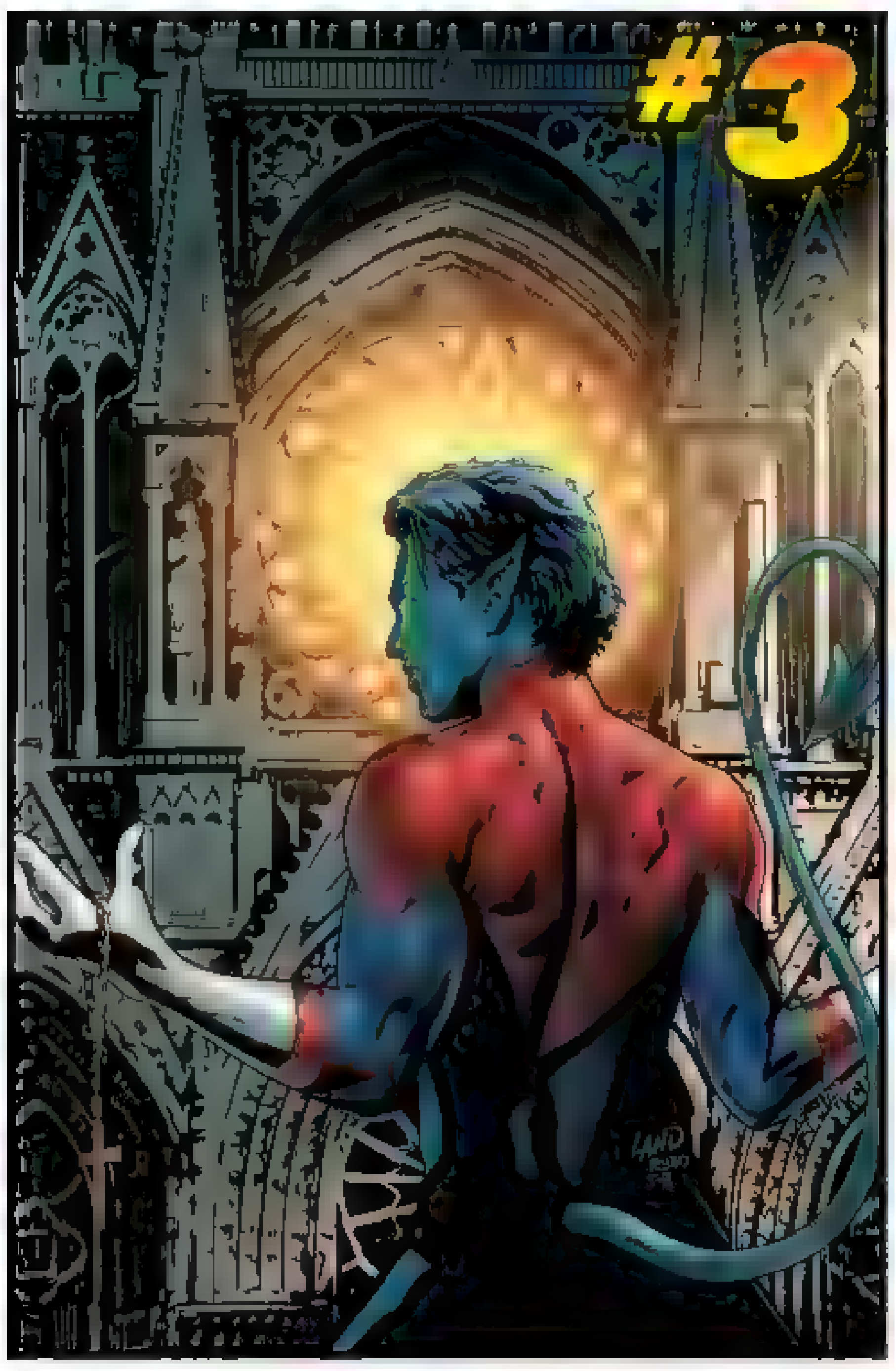

PART THREE OF FOUR

Kurt learns that the dead children were all orphans admitted to Metro-General Hospital after Dr. Childs took over the children's psychiatric ward and that their treatments were sponsored by wealthy New Yorkers.

After sneaking back into Metro-General, Kurt speaks with Seth, who is busy making fourteen clay figurines--or jars, as he calls them--one for each of his dead friends, and one for him, for when he dies. During this conversation, Seth tells Kurt that he believes it was the Devil who killed his friends…and that it will be his turn to die soon.

Before Seth can explain further, Nurse Palmer bursts in, announcing that Seth's aunt, Meredith Walker, is outside, trying to murder Dr. Childs. Kurt rushes out to help the doctor, but he's only able to subdue the enraged Mrs. Walker by taking Dr. Childs' advice and teleporting her into a nearby church. More confused than ever, Kurt immediately whisks the woman away to Limbo, to see Amanda.

In Limbo, Kurt and Amanda learn that this woman isn't Seth's aunt at all. She is, rather, a homeless woman Dr. Childs kidnapped and used as a "vessel," a host to thirteen demons who controlled her every action. Together, Amanda and Kurt realize that it was these same thirteen demons who entered the world by bursting through the bodies and souls of the thirteen dead children…and that there is a fourteenth demon still trapped--most likely inside Seth.

Meanwhile, unbeknownst to them, Dr. Childs has just arrived at the hospital to collect Seth, so that the thing inside him can be cut free…

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KRA--
METRO GENERAL
SETH'S GONE?
--KOOM!
GONE *WHERE,* CHRISTINE?
I--I'M NOT SURE, KURT. SOMEWHERE WITH DR. CHILDS.
HE JUST RUSHED IN AND-- AND TOOK SETH *AWAY.*
OH, *NO.*
IS THAT BAD?
I NEED TO BORROW YOUR PHONE, CHRISTINE.
AND THEN I NEED YOU TO HELP ME WITH SOMETHING.

KRA--
-KOOM!
THE TRAFFIC'S UNGODLY, BUT WE'LL GET THERE SOON, I PROMISE.
DR. CHILDS...
...YOU... YOU WOULDN'T HURT ME, WOULD YOU?
YOU'RE... A GOOD PERSON, AREN'T YOU?
NO, SETH, I AM NOT. AND...
...YOU ARE GOING TO BE HURT.

IT'S NOT WORTH DOING ANYTHING. SCREAMING--OR FIGHTING ME--OR TRYING TO ESCAPE. THE CAR DOORS ARE LOCKED, THE WINDOWS ARE REINFORCED AND SOUNDPROOF, AND OUR DRIVER...
...ISN'T PARTICULARLY *SYMPATHETIC* TO YOUR PLIGHT.
♪ ...MIS-TER SANDMAN...
...BRING ME A DREAM...♫
HE'S INSIDE YOU, ISN'T HE?
THE DEMON *PAZUZU?*
I- I-I-I DON'T... KNOW...
I'VE MADE A PACT WITH THE PRINCE OF LIES, SETH. THIS IS NO TIME FOR FIBBING.
PA- PACT?
FOURTEEN CHILDREN...FOURTEEN BLOOD SACRIFICES... *FLESH TUNNELS* FOR THE DEMONS TO COME THROUGH...
...THAT'S WHAT KILLED YOUR THIRTEEN LITTLE FRIENDS, YOU KNOW. THE *INFERNALS* BURSTING THROUGH THEIR SOULS AND BODIES.
BUT NOT ME.
NO, NOT YOU. WHICH IS VERY, VERY... *TIRESOME,* CHILD.
UNTIL PAZUZU'S BEEN RELEASED, MY... *ASSOCIATES* AND I CAN'T FORCE THE DEMONS TO DO ANYTHING BEYOND...OH, THE ODD MENIAL TASK.
ONCE YOU'VE GIVEN HIM UP, HOWEVER...
...OH, LOOK.
WE'RE HERE.

DID YOU KNOW THE DAKOTA BUILDING DATES BACK TO THE EARLY 1800S, SETH? BACK WHEN EVERYTHING AROUND IT WAS... COUNTRYSIDE?
SHALL WE?
GOOD EVENING, DR. CHILDS.
JEFFRIES.
PLEASE CURB YOUR DOG
BE SEEING YOU.

TOP FLOOR, PLEASE.
CERTAINLY, DR. CHILDS.
I LEARNED ABOUT THE FOURTEEN DEMONS FROM A BOOK I FOUND AT *BARNES & NOBLE*, OF ALL PLACES, IN THEIR OCCULT SECTION.
THE BOOK DESCRIBED THE RITUAL TO SET THE DEMONS FREE...
...A SIMPLE CEREMONY, REALLY, REQUIRING FOURTEEN VICTIMS AND FOURTEEN... SPONSORS. TO CONTROL THE DEMONS ONCE THEY'D BEEN LOOSED UPON THE WORLD.
EVIL'S A *RELATIVE* TERM, OF COURSE, BUT YOU'D BE SURPRISED HOW MANY OF MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS WERE WILLING TO SACRIFICE THE LIFE OF A CHILD TO HAVE A DEMON IN THEIR SERVICE.
MISTER...
MISTER WAGNER WILL STOP YOU...
I DON'T THINK SO. THE INFERNAL DIMENSION HE...*TELEPORTS* THROUGH?
AS SOON AS WE GOT HERE, I DISRUPTED IT WITH A SPELL. ONLY FOR A LITTLE WHILE--THAT'S ALL I CAN MANAGE--BUT LONG ENOUGH.
I'VE ALSO SEALED THE DAKOTA WITH A PROTECTIVE CIRCLE THAT WILL *SHRED* HIS BODY TO RIBBONS IF HE TRIES TO ENTER ANY *OTHER* WAY.
NO, YOU'RE QUITE ALONE IN ALL THIS, SETH.

WELL...
...NOT *QUITE* ALONE.
DARICK 9.04

DEAREST FRIENDS...
...OUR GUEST OF HONOR, SETH WALKER.
TO SETH WALKER...
...WHO'S CAUSED US SO MUCH TROUBLE...
SETH WALKER!
TELL ME, LOUIS...
...ARE WE GOING TO SPEND THE *ENTIRE* EVENING TOASTING LITTLE BOYS...
...OR ARE WE GOING TO *FINISH* WHAT WAS BEGUN?
...
THOUGH I DON'T NECESSARILY APPRECIATE YOUR *TONE,* MILES, YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT.

WHETHER YOU BELIEVE IT OR NOT, CHILD...
...PART OF ME *IS* SORRY.
ALL RIGHT, I NEEDED TO FORCE CHILDS'S HAND, BUT THIS HAS GONE FAR--
--ENOUGH!
GET BEHIND ME, SETH!
MILES, WHAT ARE YOU--?
ONE SECOND.
YOU'RE *NOT* MILES, ARE YOU?
OF COURSE I AM, LOUIS, WHO ELSE WOULD I--?
REVEAL YOURSELF.
UHH...
...OKAY, SO MY IMAGE-INDUCER *ISN'T* MAGIC-PROOF.

YOU'RE PERSISTENT, MR. WAGNER. I'LL SAY THAT MUCH.
I WON'T BOTHER ASKING WHAT YOU'VE DONE WITH MILES OR HOW YOU INFILTRATED OUR COVEN--
I WOULDN'T TELL HIM, ANYWAY. I JUST WANT TO *END* THIS BEFORE--
KRAAACK!
--*GOD,* I KNOW I SHOULDN'T THINK IT, BUT THAT FELT--
--GOOD GRIEF, PERSISTENT BUT *DENSE.*
LOOK AROUND YOU, MR. WAGNER. YOU'RE *SURROUNDED.*
BY HIS ACCOMPLICES...
...BY THE DEMONS...
DOESN'T MATTER.
I *WON'T* LET YOU CUT SETH OPEN, CHILDS.

CUT HIM OPEN? DO I *LOOK* LIKE A BUTCHER TO YOU, X-MAN?
UM, ACTUALLY...
I DON'T *NEED* TO CUT SETH OPEN TO FREE PAZUZU...
...JUST THIS *KNOT*, I BELIEVE...
THE ONE IN SETH'S ROPE...
...THE ROPE THAT HELPS HIM *LOCK* THINGS...
...AND PAZUZU HIMSELF WILL DO THE REST.
WAIT, WHAT DOES HE MEAN BY--?
M-MR. WAGNER...

SETH? WHAT IS IT, WHAT'S--?
...INSIDE ME...
...THERE'S...
OH, NO. IT'S--
...SOMETHING'S *GROWING* INSIDE ME...
--PAZUZU. WITH THE KNOT HAVING BEEN SEVERED, THERE'S NOTHING TO STOP THE DEMON FROM BURSTING OUT OF THE BOY'S BODY, RIPPING HIM TO PIECES.
...H-HELP ME, MR. WAGNER...
BUT I CAN'T. THERE'S NOTHING *I* CAN DO.
THANKFULLY, THOUGH...
...I BROUGHT A FRIEND WHO *CAN.*
KITTY?
I'M HERE, KURT.
SHE'S *BEEN* HERE, AS LONG AS I HAVE--DISGUISED AND HIDDEN AMONG THE GUESTS.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, WAGNER? WHO IS SHE?!
KITTY PRYDE, WHOSE MUTANT ABILITY ALLOWS HER TO "PHASE" THROUGH OBJECTS--
--TO BECOME *INTANGIBLE*--
...IT ...HURTS...
I KNOW IT DOES. BUT TAKE MY HAND AND TRY TO *RELAX*, ALL RIGHT?
--AND TO MAKE OBJECTS AND PEOPLE SHE *TOUCHES* INTANGIBLE, AS WELL.
CLOSE YOUR EYES, SETH, AND COUNT TO TEN.
AND WHEN YOU OPEN THEM AGAIN--
WHICH IS WHAT KITTY DOES TO SETH.
--IT'LL ALL BE...
...BE...
ALLOWING PAZUZU...
...OVER?
K-KURT?
...TO PASS THROUGH THE BOY'S BODY *WITHOUT* BURSTING HIS INSIDES.

THAT'S THE GOOD NEWS.

"IT WAS THEN, I WOULD SAY, THAT ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE...
LOUIS, YOU FOOL, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
"AMONG THE REST OF CHILDS'S COVEN, CERTAINLY.
"FACING A DEMON *NOT* TRAPPED WITHIN A CIRCLE, THEY FLED...
"...EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM, DOWN THE STAIRS, INTO THE DAKOTA'S LOBBY, WHERE...
"...WELL, YOU KNOW..."
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE *X-MEN* HAVE SECURED YOUR BUILDING.
YOU WILL ALL ANSWER FOR YOUR PART IN THE DEATHS OF THE THIRTEEN MURDERED CHILDREN.
"WHILE BACK UPSTAIRS, KURT...?"

"WHILE BACK UPSTAIRS, THE TRAPPED DEMONS WERE CLAMORING FOR PAZUZU TO BREAK THE CIRCLE..."
KILL HIM, BROTHER...
SPILL HIS BLOOD...
SET US FREE...
RELEASE THEM, HUMAN...
NO, I DON'T THINK I WILL.
WHAT?
YOU'RE *MY* DEMON, PAZUZU--IN *MY* SERVICE.
THE PACT I MADE WITH THE MORNINGSTAR *BINDS* YOU TO ME.
DOES IT?
NOW THAT ALL FOURTEEN OF YOU ARE FREE, YOU'RE INDEBTED TO US--EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU--FOR FOURTEEN YEARS.
IT'S NOT TRUE, BROTHER...
THE PACT DEMANDS THAT BLOOD BE SPILLED...
YOUR ESCAPE WAS BLOODLESS...

KILL HIM AND SPILL HIS BLOOD ...
KILL HIM AND BREAK THE CIRCLE ...
KILL HIM AND SET US FREE ...
BACK AWAY FROM IT, CHILDS...
AFTER ALL I'VE DONE FOR YOU, PAZUZU, WOULD YOU *HONESTLY* KILL ME?
HIS GRIP, HIS *STRENGTH*...
OH, DOCTOR ...
...YOU HAVE ***NO IDEA.***

WHAT ARE YOU...?
YOU CAN'T...
GOODBYE, DOCTOR...
AAGGHH
"PAZUZU TORE CHILDS TO BITS, ORORO, AND STOOD BEFORE US...
"...AND WE COULD LITERALLY *FEEL* THE MAGICAL CIRCLE CONTAINING THE OTHER DEMONS START TO DISSOLVE...
MEIN GOTT...
D-DON'T LOOK, SETH...
"...AT WHICH POINT..."

"...THE CAVALRY--SPECIFICALLY, AMANDA SEFTON AND NIGHT NURSE CHRISTINE PALMER--ARRIVED...
"...CHRISTINE CLUTCHING THE FOURTEEN CLAY STATUES SETH'S BEEN MOLDING SINCE HIS FRIENDS WERE KILLED...
"...WHICH, AMANDA HAD WORKED OUT, WERE *LOCKS* THE WAY THE KNOTS IN SETH'S ROPE HAD BEEN..."
I RECOGNIZE YOU, PAZUZU...
...YOU AND YOUR BROTHERS...
"...AND ALTHOUGH AMANDA'S MAGIC ALONE MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN STRONG ENOUGH TO COMMAND THE DEMONS INTO THE HOLLOW FIGURES, THE COMBINATION OF HERS AND SETH'S...
"...MOLDED INTO THOSE BITS OF CLAY..."
WAIT, WHAT ARE YOU--?

"...PROVED AMAZINGLY *POTENT.*"
PRAY THIS WORKS.
THERE WAS A SUDDEN FLASH, THEN, LIKE... LIKE A CANDLE ERUPTING INTO A FIREBALL...AND A GUST OF SCALDING AIR ACROSS MY FACE...
"...AND THEN THEY WERE *GONE,* THE FOURTEEN DEMONS...
"...AND WE WERE ALONE IN THE ROOM."

AMANDA TRAPPED THE DEMONS IN SETH'S STATUES?
YES.
AND THE STATUES THEMSELVES? WHERE ARE *THEY* NOW?
"IN *LIMBO*, WHERE AMANDA CAN KEEP WATCH OVER THEM."
THE EXORC
AND THE REST OF CHILDS'S COVEN IS IN JAIL, AND NURSE PALMER'S TRANSFERRED TO ST. VINCENT'S, AND--
--AND YOU CAN TELEPORT NORMALLY AGAIN, IS THAT RIGHT?
COMPLETELY.
AFTER CHRISTINE TOLD ME CHILDS HAD TAKEN SETH, I CALLED YOU AND AMANDA AND THEN 'PORTED HERE TO GET KITTY.
THEN I 'PORTED US TO THE DAKOTA, I GUESS RIGHT BEFORE CHILDS BLOCKED MY ABILITY TO TELEPORT--AS WELL AS MY WAY INTO THE BUILDING.
YOUR PHYSICAL BODY, YOU MEAN...
KITTY TOLD ME THAT ONCE SHE'D MADE YOU INTANGIBLE, YOU BOTH FAIRLY *STROLLED* RIGHT IN.
WE DID, YES.
AND ONCE WE WERE INSIDE, I RECOGNIZED TWO OF CHILDS'S... *ACCOMPLICES* IN THE BUILDING'S LOBBY.
KITTY AND I...INCAPACITATED THEM AND THEN USED IMAGE-INDUCERS TO TAKE THEIR PLACE AT THE CEREMONY.

...
AND YOU DO REALIZE YOU *IMPROVISED* MOST OF THIS, KURT?
OF COURSE.
"AND THAT THE ONLY REASON SETH IS ALIVE RIGHT NOW, LEARNING HOW TO CONTROL HIS POWERS WITH EMMA, IS BECAUSE OF *YOU.*"
"AND KITTY. AND AMANDA. AND NURSE PALMER. AND--"
YOU, KURT.
COME INSIDE AND WE'LL SEE HOW SETH'S DOING WITH THE ICE QUEEN...
IN A MINUTE, ORORO. RIGHT NOW...
...I WANT TO STAY IN THE *LIGHT* A WHILE LONGER.
THE DEVIL INSIDE CONCLUSION
EXORCISM
ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA WRITER
DARICK ROBERTSON PENCILER
WAYNE FAUCHER INKER
AVALON'S MATT MILLA COLORS
VC'S CORY PETIT LETTERS
STEPHANIE MOORE & SEAN RYAN ASSISTANT EDITORS
MIKE MARTS EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF
DAN BUCKLEY PUBLISHER

MARVEL

5

NIGHTCRAWLER™

AGUIRRE-SACASA
ROBERTSON
FAUCHER

He's your best friend *and* the monster that lives under your bed! And he must go where the other X-Men won't—into the shadows that have always called to him!

PREVIOUSLY

NIGHTCRAWLER

LAND
Ryan
J-Po

Kurt Wagner, a.k.a. NIGHTCRAWLER of the X-MEN, has a lot to feel good about: He's just saved a young boy from a coven of devil-worshippers and helped prevent a horde of fourteen demons from invading the earthly plane. In the process, with the help of his once-girlfriend AMANDA SEFTON (now MAGICK, sorceress ruler of the infernal dimension of Limbo), he's started to carve out a niche for himself as the X-Men's resident paranormal investigator. And he's also met a girl, lovely night nurse CHRISTINE PALMER. But no X-Man ever gets to rest for long, and even a theater-outing with friends can take a terrifying turn…

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SO YOU...
...YOU ACTUALLY *ENJOYED* THAT, IS WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?
OH, SURE, WHO DOESN'T LIKE A BIG BROADWAY MUSICAL?
UHM...
OH, COME *ON*, KURT, WHAT'S WRONG WITH *PHANTOM OF THE OPERA?*
ST
NOTHING, IN THEORY.
AND CLEARLY THEY'RE DOING *SOMETHING* RIGHT-- IT'S BEEN RUNNING *FOREVER.*
IT'S FUNNY, BUT NOW THAT YOU SAY THAT...
...I'M DATING MYSELF, BUT *PHANTOM* WAS THE FIRST SHOW I SAW WHEN I MOVED TO NEW YORK...TEN YEARS AGO.
PEOPLE SPONTANEOUSLY BURSTING INTO SONG...
...I DON'T KNOW, CHRISTINE, IT JUST MAKES ME *REALLY* UNCOMFORTABLE FOR SOME REASON.
NO COMMENT.
I WONDER WHAT THAT SAYS ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD, KURT...

REMIND ME, LOGAN, WHY WE AGREED TO THIS EVENING?
'CAUSE KURT'S TRYING TO KEEP THINGS ON A CASUAL, "FRIEND-LEVEL" WITH NURSE HONEY, I THINK--
--RIGHT.
PLAYBILL
GHOSTS ON THE TRACKS
PART 1 of 2: AND KURT HOPPED THE A TRAIN...
--AND 'CAUSE WHEN KURT CALLED TO GET TICKETS, THE PRODUCER GAVE HIM *FOUR* COMPS AND I'M A SUCKER FOR FREEBIES--
OF COURSE.
--AND 'CAUSE I'VE BEEN ON A TOTAL BROADWAY KICK SINCE YOU TOOK ME TO SEE *BOY FROM OZ*--
UH-*HUH.*
AND *WHY* ARE WE TAKING THE SUBWAY TO 125TH STREET AND THEN METRO-NORTH BACK TO WESTCHESTER? WHEN WE COULD'VE FLOWN THE *X-PLANE* JUST AS EASILY?
'CAUSE NURSE HONEY GETS AIRSICK, APPARENTLY.
UH-*HUH.*
AND I SUPPOSE NO ONE CARES THAT *I* SUFFER FROM ACUTE CLAUSTROPHOBIA AND THAT BEING UNDER--
EEEEEEEEKKK!

ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA WRITER | DARICK ROBERTSON PENCILER | WAYNE FAUCHER INKER | AVALON'S MATT MILLA COLORS | VC'S CORY PETIT LETTERS | GREG LAND COVER ARTIST | STEPHANIE MOORE & SEAN RYAN ASSISTANT EDITORS | MIKE MARTS EDITOR | JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF | DAN BUCKLEY PUBLISHER

WHAT--?
LOOK--
--OH, GOD--
--LOOK!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, MA'AM, WHATEVER IT IS, WE'LL--
OH, NO.
RATS.
LITERALLY.

HUNDREDS OF THEM, RUSHING OUT OF THE TUNNEL, *PANICKING,* AS IF THEY WERE BEING CHASED BY--
--A TRAIN?
COMING INTO THE STATION TOO FAST--
STAY BACK, PLEASE. SOMETHING'S WRONG--
KURT--
THE TRAIN'S CONDUCTOR...
STORM'S RIGHT. SOMETHING IS--
COME ON, ELF!

L-LOGAN...
OH, YOU WOULD HAVE PREFERRED *DECAPITATION?*
GENTLEMEN--
--THAT TRAIN--
--I'LL GET US ABOARD, ORORO.
BRACE YOURSELF, MY FRIEND--
--AND WE'LL--
KURT, WAIT--
BAMF!

BAMF!
CHRISTINE--
-UNF-
--WHY--?
'PORTING WITH TWO PEOPLE MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I'VE BEEN PUNCHED IN THE GUT, BUT--
I'M A *NURSE,* KURT. IF SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO THE CONDUCTOR...
--CHRISTINE'S RIGHT, OF COURSE.
LOGAN, THE PASSENGERS--
ON IT.
ALL RIGHT, PEOPLE, LISTEN UP!
THIS IS AN EMERGENCY SITUATION AND I NEED YOU TO GET AS *FAR BACK* ON THE TRAIN AS YOU CAN. TO THE LAST CAR, IF POSSIBLE.
WHILE THE TRAIN'S MOVING? HOW COME?
MYSTERY
'CAUSE I DON'T WANT YOU GETTING *HURT,* BUB.
SNIKT
BOO

GOD WILLING, LOGAN WILL BE ABLE TO USHER THEM TO THE OTHER END OF THE TRAIN. GOD WILLING, THE CONDUCTOR--
HE'S *DEAD*, KURT. AND THE TRAIN'S CONTROLS...
MTA
WHAT--WHAT NOW? HOW DO WE *STOP* IT?
I--I COULD TELEPORT THE PASSENGERS OFF, TWO OR THREE AT A TIME--
BUT EVEN AS I SAY THE WORDS, I REALIZE HOW *FEW* PEOPLE I'D BE ABLE TO SAVE BEFORE WE CRASH INTO ANOTHER TRAIN OR...
...OR...
WAIT-- DO YOU FEEL...?
WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHAT IS THAT?
THAT...
"...IS AN *X-MAN.*"
SHORT-CIRCUITING THE SUBWAY'S THIRD RAIL WITH A BOLT OF LIGHTNING (I FIND OUT LATER), CUTTING ITS POWER...

...SO THAT ENTROPY ITSELF SLOWS DOWN THE CAREENING TRAIN...
...UNTIL IT *STOPS*, SMOOTH AS CREAM.
DONATIONS FOR SAVING YOUR LIVES ACCEPTED *AND* APPRECIATED.
C'MON, PEOPLE...
...SEND A MUTIE TO COLLEGE.
GO!
THE CONDUCTOR'S FACE, KURT...
...AS IF HE WERE *FRIGHTENED* TO DEATH ...
BUT I'M NOT LOOKING AT THE CONDUCTOR. I'M LOOKING AT...
BAMF!
SIR? ARE YOU...?
...YOU SHOULDN'T-- SHOULDN'T BE HERE, SIR.
THAT SOUND I'M HEARING... LIKE... *WHISTLING?*

SOMETHING ABOUT HIM...
SEVENTEEN OF US...
SIR...?
WAIT, HE'S--
SEVENTEEN OFUSSEVENTEEN OFUS--
SEVENTEEN SEVENTEEN SEVENTEEN--!
MEIN GOTT--!
HE--IT--*WHATEVER*--PASSES THROUGH ME...
...AND THEN HE'S GONE--*VANISHED.*

KURT--
--ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I...
LOOKS LIKE YOU GOT ROYALLY *SLIMED,* PAL.
DID ANY OF YOU SEE THAT...
...THAT *MAN?*
WHAT MAN?
WHERE?
...HE WAS HERE IN THE TUNNEL WITH ME, JUST NOW.
AND HE PASSED THROUGH MY BODY AS THOUGH HE WERE A...
...A *GHOST.*
LIKE CASPER?
LOGAN...
WHAT, THAT'S A LEGIT QUESTION.
'CAUSE GHOSTS CAN BE FRIENDLY--LIKE CASPER--OR THEY CAN BE EVIL LIKE... UHM...
WHATEVER IT WAS, YOU SHOULD GET THIS...*GUNK* OFF OF YOUR BODY...
GOOD THINKING, CHRISTINE.
AND--OH, *I* KNOW--WHY DON'T YOU TAKE HIM BACK TO YOUR PLACE SO HE CAN SHOWER THERE?
'RO...

WHICH IS WHAT MORE OR LESS HAPPENS.
AFTER WE HELP THE SUBWAY PASSENGERS TO THE SURFACE, AND ORORO AND LOGAN CALL SCOTT FOR A RIDE BACK TO XAVIER'S--
--CHRISTINE AND I TAKE A CAB TO THE UPPER WEST SIDE, TO HER APARTMENT, WHERE I...
THANKS FOR THE SHOWER, CHRISTINE.
NOT AT ALL, KURT.
ANYTHING TO HAVE YOU WANDERING AROUND MY APARTMENT HALF-NAKED.
RIGHT...
SO...
...ABOUT TONIGHT?
I SHOULD PROBABLY TELL YOU...
YES?
IN THE INTEREST OF BEING COMPLETELY CANDID...
...WE'RE JUST *FRIENDS*, CHRISTINE, RIGHT?
...
WAIT, KURT, ARE WE...

...WE'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE *"A TALK,"* ARE WE?
I THINK...
...I THINK WE MIGHT BE, YES. A *PREEMPTIVE* TALK.
WELL, NOW I'M *REALLY* CONFUSED.
I MEAN, I'VE DATED ENOUGH MEN IN NEW YORK CITY TO HAVE *ZERO* LONG-TERM EXPECTATIONS, AND I *KNOW* YOU HAVE INTIMACY ISSUES (AT LEAST ACCORDING TO VH1'S "BEHIND THE HEROES" SPECIAL), BUT...
...CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG, BUT DON'T WE *LIKE* EACH OTHER?
AS FRIENDS, YES.
IF YOU SAY THE WORD "FRIENDS" ONE MORE--
I'M JUST TRYING TO BE COMPLETELY UPFRONT WITH YOU AND NOT...LEAD YOU ON.
MORE THAN I ALREADY HAVE.
IS THIS BECAUSE OF YOU AND... STORM?
BECAUSE I COULDN'T HELP NOTICING, EARLIER TONIGHT, THAT...
...OKAY, WHAT'S THAT BEEPING?
MY...MY X-LINK IN THE NEXT ROOM.
I SHOULD PROBABLY...
OF COURSE.
BUT, KURT, BEFORE YOU DO AND THEN HAVE TO RUSH OFF AND FIGHT THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS OR WHOMEVER...
IF *YOU* LIKE ME AND *I* LIKE YOU...
...IT *CAN* BE JUST *THAT* FOR RIGHT NOW, YOU KNOW.

THIS IS KURT.
KURT, IT'S ORORO. I'M NOT... **INTERRUPTING** ANYTHING, AM I?
...
N-NO, IT'S ALL RIGHT.
GOOD, BECAUSE WE'RE BACK ON THE CLOCK.
AS OF WHEN?
AS OF THE CONVERSATION I JUST HAD WITH THE MAYOR'S OFFICE FIVE MINUTES AGO.
THEY WANT YOU TO MEET WITH HIM. "THEY" MEANING THE MAYOR'S PEOPLE--
HOW FAST CAN YOU GET TO CITY HALL?
RIGHT NOW, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT?
HE WANTS TO MEET WITH ONE OF THE X-MEN ABOUT THE...THE *DISTURBANCES* IN THE SUBWAY. AND BECAUSE LOGAN AND I ARE ALREADY ON OUR WAY HOME, AND BECAUSE I KNOW YOU'RE *LOOKING* FOR REASONS TO STAY IN THE CITY--
PIZZA
ORORO, WAIT--
--DISTURBANCES? ***PLURAL?***
HAVE THERE BEEN OTHERS BESIDES THE ONE TONIGHT?

ALMOST TWO DOZEN THAT WE KNOW OF OVER THE LAST YEAR, MR. WAGNER. THE FIRST ONE DATING BACK TO...
...OCTOBER OF 2003, WHEN A MAN WAITING FOR THE A TRAIN AT THE WEST 4TH STREET STATION CLAIMED TO HAVE SEEN...
...WHAT *YOU* SAW TONIGHT.
THERE WAS AN ITEM ABOUT IT IN ***THE BUGLE*** YOU MIGHT HAVE READ?
I DIDN'T, MR. MAYOR, NO.
THE SIGHTINGS...THE ENCOUNTERS... THE *WHATEVER* YOU WANT TO CALL THEM--HAVE INCREASED IN FREQUENCY--
--AND, EVEN MORE WORRISOME, IN *THREAT*--
--THESE LAST FEW MONTHS.
FOUR DEATHS--INCLUDING THE TRAIN CONDUCTOR'S EARLIER TONIGHT--HAVE BEEN LINKED TO THE... THE...
GHOSTS?
...
THAT'S WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT, I KNOW, BUT I CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO SAY THE...THE ACTUAL WORD. CAN'T *ALLOW* MYSELF TO BELIEVE--
MR. MAYOR...
...I KNOW WHAT I SAW TONIGHT.
I KNOW WHAT I *FELT* IN THAT SUBWAY TUNNEL.
THE AIR AROUND ME GOING COLD. THE HAIR ON MY ARMS STANDING UP...
IF THERE *HAVE* BEEN OTHER INCIDENTS--IF THEY'RE GETTING WORSE--IF PEOPLE ARE *DYING* BECAUSE OF THEM...
...YOU REALLY SHOULD CALL...
...I START TO SAY, BUT I HAVE *NO IDEA* WHO--OR WHAT--TO SUGGEST.

CALL *WHOM*, MR. WAGNER?
I WOULD THINK, AFTER THE WAY...*YOUR KIND* DESTROYED SO MUCH OF THE CITY LAST YEAR, YOU'D *WANT* TO HELP.
MR. MAYOR...
I KNOW WHAT YOU DID AT METRO-GENERAL HOSPITAL. I KNOW HOW YOU STOPPED THAT...THAT CULT.
THAT WAS...
...DUMB LUCK.
I'M NOT...
...DR. STRANGE, NOT BROTHER VOODOO.
MOREOVER, DO YOU KNOW WHAT *HAPPENS* NEXT WEEK, MR. WAGNER?
NEXT WEEK, NEW YORK'S SUBWAY SYSTEM CELEBRATES ITS *CENTENNIAL*.
AND AS SOON AS HE SAYS THAT, I SUDDENLY UNDERSTAND *EVERYTHING*.
WHY I HADN'T HEARD ABOUT ANY OF THE PAST DISTURBANCES...
WHY THE MAYOR WANTS ONE OF US--ONE OF THE *X-MEN*--TO HELP HIM INSTEAD OF, SAY, THE FANTASTIC FOUR...
THE OLDEST UNDERGROUND TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM IN THE COUNTRY, RUNNING CONTINUOUSLY SINCE OCTOBER 4, 1904. AS "NEW YORK" AS THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING. A SOURCE OF CIVIC PRIDE, AN ENORMOUS REVENUE-GENERATOR FOR THE CITY...
...BECAUSE WE'RE USED TO OPERATING UNDER THE RADAR.
NEXT WEEK, THERE'S AN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION PLANNED HERE AT CITY HALL--THE SITE OF NEW YORK'S FIRST SUBWAY STATION--AND IT WOULD BE...
...
...IDEALLY, THERE WOULDN'T BE ANY...
...BAD PUBLICITY TO RUIN THE FESTIVITIES.
LIKE ANOTHER INEXPLICABLE DEATH ON AN A TRAIN--
--OR RUMORS THAT THE SUBWAY SYSTEM IS... *HAUNTED*.
...
SAFETY, MR. WAGNER, IS MY PRIMARY CONCERN HERE.
NOT PUBLIC RELATIONS.

"MY AIDE'S PULLED TOGETHER EVERYTHING WE HAVE ABOUT THESE... INCIDENTS.
"IF THERE'S ANYTHING *ELSE* YOU NEED, GIVE HIM A CALL AND WE'LL DO OUR BEST TO GET IT TO YOU..."
THERE'S NOT MUCH IN THE FILES. SECOND-HAND ACCOUNTS OF THE SIGHTINGS...
THE NEWSPAPER ARTICLE THE MAYOR MENTIONED...THREE DEATH CERTIFICATES--A HOMELESS MAN, A STRUNG-OUT DRUG-KID, AND AN ELDERLY WOMAN--WITH THE LATEST ONE NOT YET FILED...
...THE ONE BELONGING TO THE TRAIN CONDUCTOR...
...THOUGH IT *DOES* LIST HIS HOME PHONE NUMBER AND HIS WIFE'S--HIS WIDOW'S--NAME.
...
IF I WERE MRS. WARREN, WOULD I WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE--OR WOULD I WANT AN ANSWER TO THE MYSTERY OF MY HUSBAND'S DEATH?
...IN THE END, I TELL MYSELF THAT EVERY DAY THAT PASSES, MORE PEOPLE ARE PUT AT RISK--
--AND THAT HOPEFULLY, PERHAPS, I CAN OFFER HER SOME KIND OF COMFORT.
MRS. WARREN? I'M KURT WAGNER FROM THE X-MEN.

THE KETTLE'S ON THE STOVE, MR. WAGNER.
AND PLEASE DON'T FEEL YOU HAVE TO APOLOGIZE AGAIN. BELIEVE ME, I WASN'T GETTING MUCH SLEEP TONIGHT, ANYWAY.
I'M SO... SO SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS, MRS. WARREN.
THEY TOLD ME--
--THE POLICE TOLD ME--
--THAT YOU TRIED TO SAVE MY HUSBAND'S LIFE.
I DID--
--WE DID--
--YES.
AND NOW YOU'RE INVESTIGATING WHAT...WHAT CAUSED HIS DEATH?
YES, MA'AM. TO...TO TRY TO KEEP IT FROM HAPPENING AGAIN.
IT'S BEEN GOING ON FOR MONTHS, YOU KNOW.
MY HUSBAND'S BEEN TALKING ABOUT THE GHOSTS FOR... MONTHS.
AT FIRST, HE WOULD ONLY SEE THEM IN HIS...HIS PERIPHERAL VISION, HE SAID, HOVERING IN THE GAPS BETWEEN TRAIN CARS.
ALWAYS AT NIGHT, ALWAYS WHEN HE WAS ALONE ON HIS TRAIN, DRIVING IT BACK TO THE END OF THE LINE...
THEY DIDN'T SCARE HIM, SCOTT SAID. THEY WERE--IN A WAY--THEY WERE *COMFORTING...*
NO, THAT'S NOT THE RIGHT WORD. BUT THEY DEFINITELY WEREN'T THREATENING...
NOT UNTIL RECENTLY, AT LEAST.
BUT NOW...

WHY WOULD THEY HAVE HURT YOUR HUSBAND, MRS. WARREN? DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA?
WHY WOULD THEY HAVE...
...WHY WOULD THEY HAVE SCARED HIM TO DEATH LIKE THAT?
...
HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT GHOSTS, MR. WAGNER?
DO YOU KNOW THAT GHOSTS ARE...
...THAT THEY'RE *BOUND* DEAD PEOPLE? WHO DON'T WANT TO LET GO OR...OR WHO *CAN'T?*
THEY'RE HOLDING ON FOR... FOR *REVENGE,* MAYBE. OR BECAUSE THEY'VE LEFT SOMETHING UNDONE, SOMETHING UNFINISHED. OR BECAUSE...
THIS LAST WEEK, BEFORE HE DIED, SCOTT TOLD ME HE THOUGHT THAT THE GHOSTS...
...THAT MAYBE THEY NEEDED *HELP.*
SCOTT COULDN'T EXPLAIN WHY--IT WAS JUST A SENSE, HE SAID--BUT MAYBE THE GHOSTS WANTED HELP AND HE COULDN'T GIVE IT AND *THAT'S* WHY THEY HURT HIM?
I WISH I KNEW, MR. WAGNER...
IT'S THE ONLY THING I'VE BEEN ABLE TO THINK ABOUT SINCE THE POLICE CALLED ME...
WHY SCOTT? *WHY* MY HUSBAND?
I CAN'T...
...THERE'S NOTHING FOR ME TO...
WHEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

EEEEEEEEEEHHHHHH!!
I LEAVE THE WARRENS' APARTMENT AND I HEAD BACK UNDERGROUND.
ACCORDING TO THE MAYOR'S FILE, ALL OF THE GHOSTLY SIGHTINGS HAVE OCCURRED ON THE SUBWAY'S A LINE, RUNNING UP AND DOWN NEW YORK'S WEST SIDE.
I SPEND TWO HOURS TELEPORTING BETWEEN SUBWAY CARS AND TRAINS, LOOKING FOR...*ANYTHING.*
I GET SOME DIRTY LOOKS BECAUSE OF MY BLUE FUR, BUT NOT AS MANY AS YOU'D THINK.
I GET THREE PHONE NUMBERS, TOO, FROM WOMEN WHO ARE ATTRACTIVE BUT NOT AS ATTRACTIVE AS CHRISTINE...
(THOUGHTS OF HER COMPETE WITH THOUGHTS OF WHAT I SAW IN THESE DARK TUNNELS EARLIER TONIGHT...)
"*SEVENTEEN* OF US," THE THING HAD SAID.
MEANING...? THAT THERE ARE SEVENTEEN GHOSTS?
(FOURTEEN DEMONS, SEVENTEEN GHOSTS... WHAT'S NEXT? *TWELVE* ZOMBIES?)

IN NEW YORK, THE SUBWAY SYSTEM NEVER SHUTS DOWN, BUT THIS LATE--THREE, FOUR IN THE MORNING--TRAINS ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN.
I DECIDE I'LL COVER MORE GROUND ON FOOT, FOLLOWING THE TRACKS AND *BAMFING* OUT OF THE WAY IN CASE AN A TRAIN *DOES* SHOW UP.
AS THE MINUTES TICK OFF, AND I WALK AND WALK, I THINK OF...
...THE MAYOR.
IF HE'S AS CONCERNED AS HE SAYS HE IS, WHY *NOT* POSTPONE THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION? WHY ACT LIKE THE MAYOR IN *JAWS* WHO REFUSES TO CLOSE THE BEACH EVEN AFTER HE'S SEEN PROOF OF THE KILLER WHITE?
I THINK, TOO, OF...
...MRS. WARREN, THE CONDUCTOR'S WIDOW.
I THINK OF HER SITTING AWAKE IN THAT COLD, GRAY APARTMENT...
...AND IT OCCURS TO ME THAT THERE ARE ALL KINDS OF HAUNTINGS IN THIS WORLD--
--AND THAT MRS. WARREN IS GOING BE HAUNTED BY LONELINESS--AND GRIEF --AND UNCERTAINTY--
--FOR A VERY LONG TIME.
I THINK OF--
--WAIT, IS MY FLASHLIGHT...?

OH...
...GREAT.
THIS IS THE PART WHERE--IF THIS WERE A HORROR MOVIE--THE AUDIENCE WOULD START YELLING FOR THE MAIN CHARACTER TO GET KILLED BY FREDDY OR MICHAEL OR CHUCKY OR LEATHERFACE.
LUCKILY, I'M NOT AFRAID OF THE DARK.
AND LUCKILY, I'VE JUST BEEN USING THE FLASHLIGHT TO AUGMENT THE FACT THAT I CAN SEE BETTER IN THE DARK THAN... PEOPLE WHO *AREN'T* "MY KIND."
THOUGH, ACTUALLY, SINCE I HAVE AN EXTRA SET OF BATTERIES...
...I MIGHT AS WELL REPLACE...
...WAIT, IS THAT...?
WHISTLING AGAIN? IS SOMEONE...?
IGNORE IT, KURT.
AND TRY TO IGNORE WHAT YOU'RE FEELING ALL OF A SUDDEN. THAT YOU'RE...THAT YOU'RE...
...OH, GOD...
...LIKE WADING INTO A POOL OF *FREEZING* WATER...
IGNORE IT.
IGNORE IT AND SLIP THE BATTERIES INTO PLACE--
THERE.
--AND TWIST THE HANDLE--
--AND TURN... ON...THE...

...LIGHT?
TO BE CONTINUED!

MARVEL

6

NIGHTCRAWLER™

AGUIRRE-SACASA
ROBERTSON
FAUCHER

He's your best friend *and* the monster that lives under your bed! And he must go where the other X-Men won't—into the shadows that have always called to him!

PREVIOUSLY

NIGHTCRAWLER

"GHOSTS ON THE TRACKS"

Kurt Wagner, a.k.a. NIGHTCRAWLER, has started to carve out a niche for himself as the X-Men's resident paranormal investigator. So when he and his friends (including night nurse CHRISTINE PALMER) encounter a ghost in the New York subway system, he's the natural choice to look into the matter. Spurred on by the fact that the subway's centennial celebrations are fast approaching and that these subway ghosts are responsible for a growing number of deaths, Kurt talks to the widow of a train conductor killed by the ghosts, who provides him with a clue. Ghosts usually want something, she tells Kurt, closure for the unfinished business that's keeping them from leaving this world. So Kurt ventures into the dark tunnels under the streets of New York to find out what it is these ghosts want--hopefully, without becoming their next victim!

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BOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT
"100 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK, NEW YORK'S LANDSCAPE--AND REALLY, THE WAY THE ENTIRE CITY *OPERATED*--CHANGED FOREVER WHEN MAYOR GEORGE McCLELLAN PULLED THE LEVER THAT SET THE CITY'S FIRST SUBWAY TRAIN IN MOTION.
"WITH McCLELLAN AT THE CONTROLS AND PEOPLE CELEBRATING BOTH ABOVE *AND* BELOW GROUND, THE TRAIN SHOT UP FROM CITY HALL TO 145TH STREET--THEN BACK DOWN AGAIN.
"IT TOOK *FOUR YEARS* TO BUILD THE 9-MILE-LONG TUNNEL AND 26 STATIONS THAT MADE UP THAT FIRST SUBWAY LINE--AND THOSE EARLY RIDES COST ONLY A *NICKEL.*"
"AS OPPOSED TO *TWO DOLLARS* NOW. *ASTONISHING,* ISN'T IT, KURT?"
"YES, HANK. ALTHOUGH CONSIDER THAT THERE ARE NOW *722 MILES* OF TUNNELS AND OVER *450 STATIONS* TO PAY FOR AND MAINTAIN.
"AND THAT THE SINGLE LONGEST SUBWAY LINE--THE 'A' EXPRESS ROUTE FROM 207TH STREET IN NORTHERN MANHATTAN TO THE ROCKAWAYS IN QUEENS--IS *32 MILES LONG.*"
WANTED

"THE CITY'S ORIGINAL, HISTORIC SUBWAY LINE--ON WHICH McCLELLAN TOOK HIS RIDE--WAS ABSORBED INTO THE 'A' EXPRESS ROUTE...DECADES AGO.
"WHICH EXPLAINS, PERHAPS, WHY NOW--ON THE EVE OF THE SUBWAY'S CENTENNIAL--THE 'A' IS THE SUBWAY LINE THAT'S BEING HAUNTED."
"AH. I *FELT* THAT YOU WERE COMING TO A POINT WITH ALL THIS."
"THE MAYOR, TRYING TO KEEP THE HAUNTINGS OUT OF THE PRESS--AND, IF POSSIBLE, ***RESOLVE*** THEM BEFORE THE SUBWAY'S OFFICIAL BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION IN A FEW DAYS--ASKED THE ***X-MEN*** FOR HELP--"
CELEBRATING 100 YEARS UNDERGROUND
"--AND BECAUSE WE'RE TRYING TO ESTABLISH A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CITY'S CURRENT ADMINISTRATION--"
"--AND BECAUSE, AS YOU KNOW, I'M BECOMING THE X-MEN'S UNOFFICIAL EXPERT ON THE ***SUPERNATURAL***--"
...AFTER WHAT MUTANTS DID TO NEW YORK LAST YEAR, EMMA, IT'S IMPORTANT WE SHOW THE MAYOR THAT WE'RE NOT ***ALL*** UNCOOPERATIVE DESPOTS.
... I'M SORRY, DID YOU SAY ***SOMETHING***, PRINCESS?
"--ORORO ASKED ***ME*** TO INVESTIGATE.
"WHICH IS WHAT I'D BEEN DOING, HANK, WANDERING THE DESERTED TUNNELS AND STATIONS OF THE 'A' LINE, LOOKING FOR OUR ***GHOSTS***.
"OF COURSE, HOW IT WORKED OUT WAS..."
PART 2 of 2
VOICES OF THE DEAD
GHOSTS ON THE TRACKS
ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA WRITER
DARICK ROBERTSON PENCILER
WAYNE FAUCHER INKER
AVALON'S MATT MILLA COLORS
VC'S CORY PETIT LETTERS
GREG LAND COVER ARTIST
STEPHANIE MOORE & SEAN RYAN ASSISTANT EDITORS
MIKE MARTS EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF
DAN BUCKLEY PUBLISHER

"...THEY FOUND ME."
BAMF!
KRACK
MEIN GOTT. THAT COULD'VE...
(WHAT KIND OF GHOSTS HAVE WEIGHT AND STRENGTH?)
IF HE'D CONNECTED WITH THAT HAMMER IT COULD'VE...
WHA--?

OH, *BRILLIANT.*
FINE. IF HE CAN GRAB HOLD OF ME--
--*I* CAN GRAB HOLD OF *HIM*--
--AND THROW HIM RIGHT INTO HIS--
--FRIENDS?
--*WHOA!*

THIS IS *INSANE!*
KRACK
THEY GO FROM TANGIBLE TO INTANGIBLE--
BAMF!
--AS FAST AS I CAN *TELEPORT*--
BAMF!
WHAT DO THEY--?

WHAT DO YOU WANT?!
"BUT I SWEAR TO YOU, HANK, AS SOON AS I WAS IN CONTACT WITH THE THING, I COULD *FEEL* IT.
"THIS OVERWHELMING, ALMOST PALPABLE *NEED...*
"...AND I REMEMBERED SOMETHING SLOAN WARREN, THE CONDUCTOR'S WIDOW, TOLD ME."
THIS LAST WEEK, BEFORE HE DIED, SCOTT TOLD ME HE THOUGHT THAT THE GHOSTS...
...THAT MAYBE THEY NEED *HELP.*
IS THAT WHY YOU'VE BEEN HURTING PEOPLE? BECAUSE YOU WANT *HELP* WITH SOMETHING?
"AND FOR ONE SECOND--
"--THE THING AT MY FEET WAS *HUMAN* AGAIN."

"AND THEN, LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A JAPANESE HORROR MOVIE, IT *VANISHED*--
"--AND REAPPEARED *BEHIND* ME, SILENTLY INDICATING--"
FOLLOW THE TRACKS? YOU WANT ME TO *FOLLOW*--?
HM.
"APPARENTLY, HANK, THEY *ALL* DID."
... THIS ACTUALLY *DOES* FEEL LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF *THE GRUDGE*...

"I FOLLOWED THE TRAIL OF GHOSTS FOR...MILES, IT FELT LIKE.
"THROUGH DARK, ABANDONED STATIONS--
"--AND LIT, BUT MOSTLY DESERTED ONES--
125 ST.
145th st.
"--UP UNTIL THE 145TH STREET STATION..."
DID *YOU* DO THIS? BREAK OPEN THE WALL?
NO ANSWER, EXCEPT FOR THAT WHISTLING AGAIN, DRIFTING THROUGH THE STATION...
WHY? AM I SUPPOSED TO...
...FIND...

...SOMETHING?
"IN MY HANDS. MIXED IN WITH THE BROKEN BITS OF CEMENT AND TILE..."
WHAT...?
"BUT HE'D DISAPPEARED, I...
WELL, OF COURSE, BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT GHOSTS *DO*.
WHILE YOU...
...*YOU* EMERGED FROM THE UNDERWORLD IN THE WEE HOURS BEFORE DAWN, RETURNED HOME, AND DECIDED IT WOULD BE ALL RIGHT TO WAKE *ME* UP.
YES, HANK.
OF COURSE, BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT *YOU* DO.
...YES, HANK.

I WOULD'VE GONE TO SOMEONE ELSE TO RUN THESE KINDS OF TESTS--
THE LOVELY CHRISTINE PALMER?
YES. EXCEPT WE'RE NOT ON THE--
BEST OF TERMS?
NO.
WHAT?
NOTHING, IT'S JUST... *I'M* COVERED IN BLUE FUR AND CAN'T GET A DATE. *YOU'RE* COVERED IN BLUE FUR AND ARE FOREVER *EXTRICATING* YOURSELF FROM ONE OR *MORE* ROMANTIC ENTANGLEMENTS.
I'M *BEGINNING* TO GET A COMPLEX.
WELL, IF YOU WANT TO TRADE PLACES FOR THE NEXT--
THESE ARE HUMAN BONES, BY THE WAY.
FROM SOMEONE'S JAW OR SKULL, I BELIEVE.
YOU CAN TELL THAT? ALREADY?
I'M A TRAINED PATHOLOGIST WITH HYPER-ACUTE SENSES, KURT. I ONCE REASSEMBLED EMMA FROST'S SHATTERED DIAMOND BODY LIKE SO MANY PIECES OF A JIGSAW PUZZLE, REMEMBER? NOT TO MENTION...
...I'M *ADDICTED* TO THOSE *CSI* SHOWS.

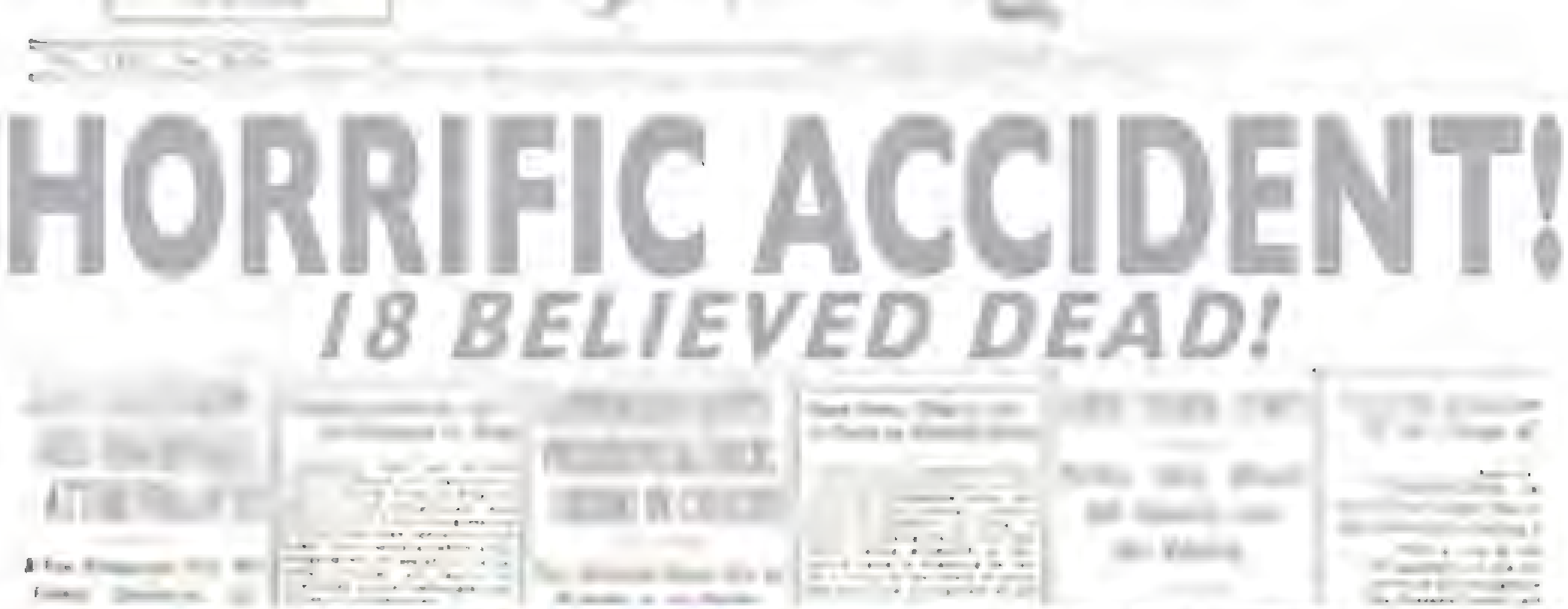
HOW *OLD* ARE THE BONES, HANK? HOW MANY YEARS HAVE THEY BEEN DOWN THERE?
FROM THE LOOKS OF IT...FIFTY OR SIXTY?
FOR THAT, I *WILL* HAVE TO RUN SOME TESTS...
CAN YOU? AND IN THE MEANTIME...
YOU'LL SMOOTH THINGS OVER WITH NURSE PALMER? OR, AT LEAST, PASS ME HER NUMBER?
HANK.
IN THE MEANTIME, CAN I TAKE ONE OF THE PIECES OF BONE WITH ME OR DO YOU NEED THEM BOTH?
NO, FEEL FREE TO TAKE ONE. BUT, KURT...
...WITH THE EXCEPTION OF REED RICHARDS'S, NO LAB IN THIS COUNTRY IS AS SOPHISTICATED AS WHAT I HAVE HERE.
WHO DO YOU THINK WILL BE ABLE TO TELL MORE ABOUT THESE BONES THAN ME?
OH, HANK...
...THERE ARE MORE THINGS IN HEAVEN AND EARTH THAN ARE DREAMT OF IN YOUR PHILOSOPHY...
WELL, *THISSSS* ISSS A *SSSURPRISSSE...*
HELLO, SSSSTRANGER...
BRAD, ROGER--
--IS *AMANDA* HOME?

IS THIS GOING TO BECOME A REGULAR THING? YOU VISITING ME IN *LIMBO?*
BECAUSE IF IT IS, I COULD CLEAR OUT ONE OF MY *DRAWERS...* MAKE SOME SPACE FOR YOU IN THE MEDICINE CABINET...
AMANDA...
WHAT, LOVER? YOU KNOW *ME.* THERE AREN'T MANY THINGS I *WON'T* ABIDE...
...BUT SHARING TOILETRIES IS ONE OF THEM.
JUST-- CAN YOU HELP ME? CAN YOU TELL ME ANYTHING ABOUT THE BONE?
ACTUALLY...
...THE BONE *ITSELF* WILL TELL US.
COME AGAIN?
THE KIND OF MAGIC THAT'S NEEDED...
...IT'S CALLED *NECROMANCY,* KURT.
THE SYMBOLS ON THE TABLE...
...THEY'RE NOT--?
OH, DARLING, *PLEASE.* IF YOU CAN HAVE BIG *"X'S"* PAINTED ON YOUR FURNITURE BACK HOME, I CAN HAVE *RUNES* ON MINE.

...
ANYWAY, NECROMANCY--WHAT CAN BEST HELP US NOW, I THINK--IS THE MAGIC OF SPEAKING TO THE DEAD.
YOU CAN HONESTLY DO THAT? TALK TO THE--?
I'M A TRAINED MEDIUM WITH ACUTE ESP, KURT. WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF DR. STRANGE, I'M THE MOST SKILLFUL OCCULTIST CURRENTLY LIVING.
IF NOT THE MOST HUMBLE...
REST ASSURED, IF THERE ARE ANY SECRETS EMBEDDED IN THIS TINY PIECE OF BONE...
...I'LL SUSS THEM OUT.
AMANDA CLOSES HER EYES TO START "CHANNELING," AND I'M...FLASHING BACK TO MY FIRST YEAR WITH THE X-MEN.
TO WHEN JEAN WOULD MAKE US SIT IN A CIRCLE IN THE PROFESSOR'S OFFICE AND "PLAY SÉANCE."
MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, WITH A OUIJA BOARD...
(I'M TRYING MY BEST TO KEEP FROM LAUGHING...)

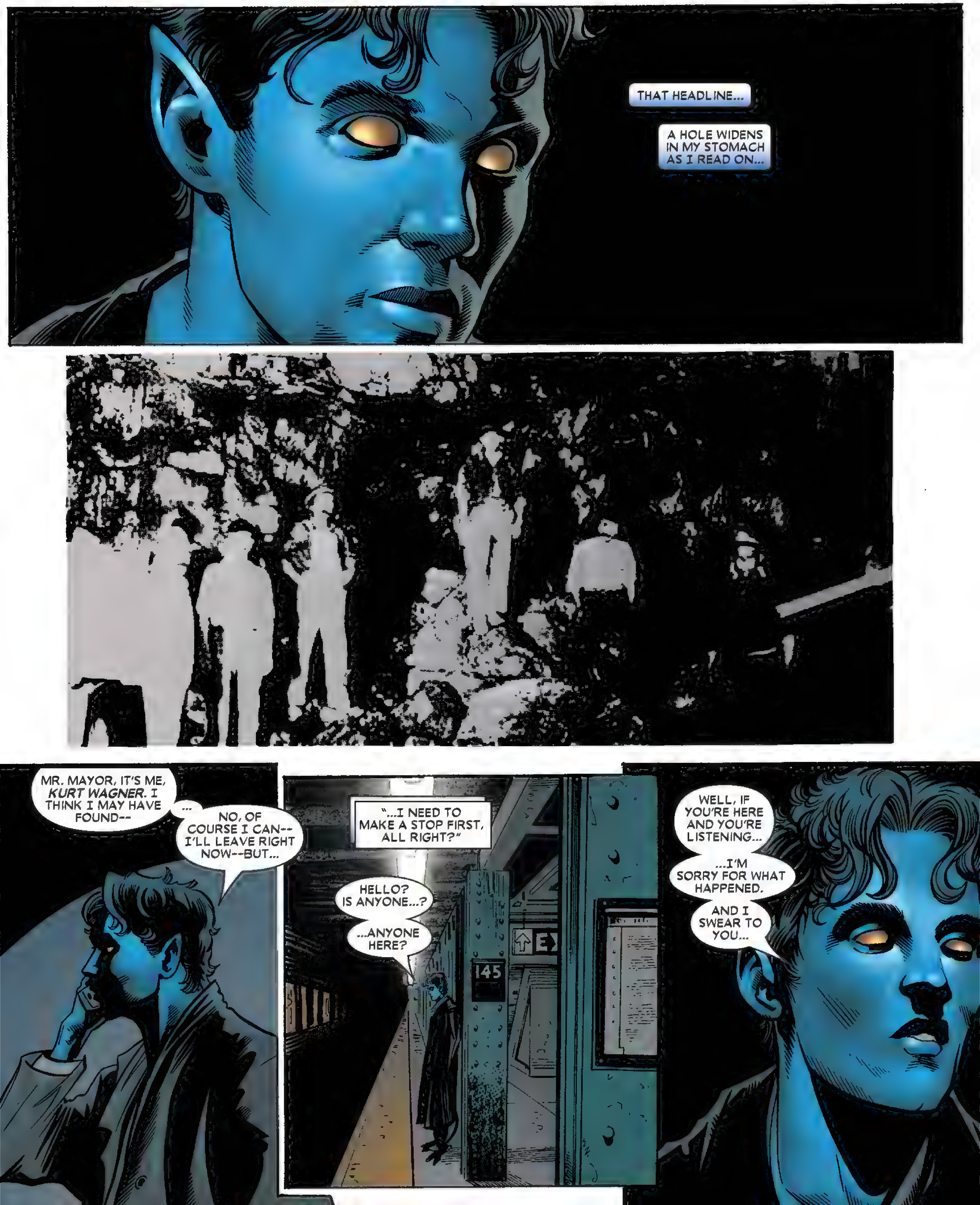
AND THEN THE ROOM GOES COLD. AND AMANDA'S THERE...BUT *NOT* THERE. TALKING FROM...SOME-PLACE *ELSE.*
...
HE'S... A MAN. THEY WERE...
...ALL OF THEM WERE MEN.
THEY SPENT MOST OF THEIR LIVES...
...IN THE *DARK?*
UNDERGROUND?
THEY WERE...
THEY *WHISTLED* TO PASS THE TIME, HE'S SAYING...
SAYING?
HE'S TALKING TO YOU? RIGHT AT THIS SECOND?
HE *WHO,* BY THE WAY?
HE TRIED TO WARN THEIR FOREMAN...
HE KNEW THEY WERE WORKING TOO FAST, THAT THE MEN WERE EXHAUSTED...
MEN?
THE WORKERS, DOES HE MEAN?
...I ASK, BUT THE ROOM'S GOING WARM AGAIN.
...
NOT JUST WORKERS, KURT...

"...HIS *FAMILY.*"
SOMETIMES, A MYSTERY ISN'T A MYSTERY AT ALL.
SOMETIMES, IT'S NOT SO MUCH A QUESTION OF *SOLVING* A RIDDLE--
--AS IT IS A MATTER OF *UNCOVERING A TRUTH.*
UNCOVERING--AND *ACKNOWLEDGING*--SOMETHING THAT'S BEEN FORGOTTEN...
WITH AMANDA'S DIVINATIONS POINTING THE WAY, I ASK THE MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR ACCESS TO THE PUBLIC LIBRARY'S "MORGUE."
STACKS AND STACKS OF NEWSPAPERS, BOUND IN LEATHER, DATING BACK TO THE 1800S...
I SPEND THREE HOURS WADING THROUGH EVERY EDITION OF *THE NEW YORK TIMES* FROM 1900 ONWARDS, UNTIL I GET TO...
OCTOBER 25, 1903...



HORRIFIC ACCIDENT!

18 BELIEVED DEAD!


THAT HEADLINE...
A HOLE WIDENS IN MY STOMACH AS I READ ON...
MR. MAYOR, IT'S ME, *KURT WAGNER*. I THINK I MAY HAVE FOUND--
...
NO, OF COURSE I CAN--I'LL LEAVE RIGHT NOW--BUT...
"...I NEED TO MAKE A STOP FIRST, ALL RIGHT?"
HELLO? IS ANYONE...?
...ANYONE HERE?
145
WELL, IF YOU'RE HERE AND YOU'RE LISTENING...
...I'M SORRY FOR WHAT HAPPENED.
AND I SWEAR TO YOU...

"...I'LL TRY TO SET THINGS *RIGHT.*"
THIS IS VERY...DISTRESSING, MR. WAGNER.
DO YOU MEAN THE ACCIDENT ITSELF OR THE FACT THAT NO REPARATIONS HAVE EVER BEEN MADE TO THE VICTIMS' SURVIVING FAMILY MEMBERS?
BECAUSE THAT'S THE *ONLY* ARTICLE I COULD FIND ABOUT THE MEN'S DEATHS. THERE WERE NO FOLLOW-UPS, NO OBITUARIES, *NOTHING.*
MAKING ME THINK THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOME KIND OF--
--COVER-UP?
SPEARHEADED BY MAYOR McCLELLAN AND HIS CRONIES? TO KEEP THE TARNISH OFF THEIR SHINY NEW SUBWAY SYSTEM?
FRANKLY, MR. MAYOR... *YES.*
...
ALL RIGHT, BUT IN THE 101 YEARS SINCE? WHY HASN'T ANYTHING BEEN DONE? WHY IS THIS ONLY COMING TO LIGHT NOW?
BECAUSE IT'S EASIER TO LET SLEEPING DOGS LIE?
YOU'RE THE POLITICIAN...
WELL, WHATEVER THE REASON, I KNOW ABOUT IT *NOW.*
SO LET'S SEE IF I CAN'T DO A LITTLE MORE *DIGGING,* HMM?
AND PAY OFF SOME LONG-STANDING *DEBTS.*

"THOSE NEXT FEW DAYS, LEADING UP TO THE CENTENNIAL'S KICK-OFF PARTY AT CITY HALL, THE TUNNELS ALONG THE A LINE WERE...MERCIFULLY *QUIET.*"
THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM, KURT?
WE'LL SEE, ORORO...
"THE 'IT' EVENT OF THE SEASON, THE PARTY WAS A SWANK, STAR-STUDDED AFFAIR.
"PACKED NOT JUST WITH CITY OFFICIALS AND THE PRESS, BUT WITH NEW YORK'S GLITTERATI...
"...AS WELL AS SOME LESS FAMILIAR FACES."
FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, LOGAN, COULD YOU PLEASE REMEMBER YOUR MILITARY TRAINING AND TRY TO BLEND IN WITH EVERYONE ELSE?
YOU GOT IT, 'RO.
IT'S JUST THAT THESE LI'L CRABCAKES ARE SO *TASTY...*
KURT? ARE YOU SEEING WHAT I'M SEEING?
YES, SCOTT.
THEY ACTUALLY STARTED MATERIALIZING A FEW MINUTES AGO.
"THE *GHOSTS* WE WERE TALKING ABOUT.
"SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE PARTY, AS IGNORED IN DEATH AS THEY WERE IN LIFE."

"THEY WERE WAITING, I COULD TELL, TO SEE IF I WOULD KEEP MY WORD TO THEM--
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, HONORED GUESTS...
...THANK YOU FOR JOINING ME TONIGHT TO CELEBRATE THIS MOST NEW YORK OF INSTITUTIONS ON ITS HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY...
100 YEARS UNDERGROUND
"--EVEN AS *I* WAS WAITING TO SEE IF THE MAYOR WOULD KEEP HIS WORD TO ME."
...MANY THINGS WORTH TOASTING TONIGHT AND MANY PEOPLE WORTH HONORING, BUT BEFORE THAT CAN HAPPEN...
"AND THE MAYOR STARTED DESCRIBING AN ACCIDENT THAT HAPPENED DURING THE SUBWAY'S CONSTRUCTION...
"AT WHAT WOULD EVENTUALLY BECOME THE 145TH STREET STATION ON THE 'A' LINE..."
...BLASTING AND TUNNELING THROUGH SOLID ROCK WAS AN INEXACT, ***DANGEROUS*** SCIENCE BACK THEN--
--MADE ***DOUBLY*** SO BY THE FACT THAT MOST CREWS WORKED MULTIPLE SHIFTS TO COMPLETE THE CONSTRUCTION ON TIME...
THE LABORERS WERE OVERWORKED AND EXHAUSTED...
ENGINEERS AND FOREMEN GOT CARELESS...
THERE WAS EXPLOSION AND A CAVE-IN...
SEVENTEEN MEN WERE KILLED--CRUSHED INSTANTLY OR BURIED ALIVE...
THE MEN WERE ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS, MOST OF THEM FROM THE SAME FAMILY...
"A FAMILY OF WIDOWS AND CHILDLESS MOTHERS AFTER OCTOBER 24, 1903..."
EMPIRE
NER
EMPIRE
...WHICH WAS ONE YEAR--TO THE DAY--BEFORE THE SUBWAY OFFICIALLY OPENED. ONE HUNDRED AND ONE YEARS AGO *TODAY*...

...LITTLE WAS WRITTEN ABOUT THAT ACCIDENT, AND NOTHING WAS DONE FOR THE DEAD MEN'S FAMILIES.
WHICH IS WHY I'VE SET UP A SPECIAL TASK FORCE TO LOCATE AS MANY OF THE MEN'S SURVIVING RELATIONS--GRANDCHILDREN BY NOW, OR GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN--AS POSSIBLE, TO MAKE AMENDS....
"AND THE STRANGEST THING HAPPENED AS THE MAYOR WAS TALKING, CHRISTINE...
"...ONE BY ONE, THE GHOSTS STARTED... *VANISHING.*
"SATISFIED THAT THEIR SACRIFICE WAS *FINALLY* GOING TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED...
"UNTIL THERE WAS ONLY ONE GHOST LEFT...
"...WHO ALSO..."

...EVAPORATED?
YES.
BUT...HOW DID YOU KNOW IT WOULD WORK? THE MAYOR... PUBLICLY RECOGNIZING THEIR DEATHS?
HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT WOULD BE ENOUGH TO...PUT THEM TO REST?
AMANDA SAID AS MUCH AS I WAS GETTING READY TO LEAVE LIMBO...
IN A LOT OF WAYS, GHOSTS ARE JUST LIKE *US,* KURT. IF THEY'RE COLD, THEY WANT TO BE MADE WARM. IF THEY'RE LONELY, THEY WANT COMPANY. IF THEY'VE BEEN SILENCED...
"...THEY WANT TO BE HEARD," SHE SAID.
DO YOU THINK THE MAYOR MEANS WHAT HE SAID? THAT HE'LL HELP THE GHOSTS' FAMILIES?
I HOPE SO. BECAUSE IF NOT...
...THEY'LL COME BACK, EVEN ANGRIER.

WHAT A *WASTE,* CHRISTINE.
WHEN I THINK HOW EASILY ALL THIS COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED... THE CONDUCTOR, THE OTHER PEOPLE WHO'VE DIED THESE LAST FEW WEEKS...
YOU DID WHAT YOU COULD, KURT.
DON'T... DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP OVER THIS.
...
THANK YOU, CHRISTINE, YOU'RE...
...A GOOD FRIEND-- I *KNOW.*
REST ROOM
NO, IT'S ALL RIGHT.
IF THAT'S REALLY *ALL* YOU WANT ME TO BE...
...I'M FINE WITH THAT.
I MEAN... THAT'S WHY I CAME TO HAVE COFFEE WITH YOU WHEN YOU CALLED.
CHRISTINE, I...
IT'S... OKAY, KURT.
I'M... OKAY.
THE END

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